

a star trek
fanzine

Scotpress



ENTERPRISE

LOG ENTRIES 81

CONTENTS

The Seven Ages of Fan	by Lyn Muir	P 2
Bitter-Sweet Revenge	by Sandy Catchick	P 3
Doubt	by Krysia Raczala	P 29
Friendship	by Maggie Symon	P 54
Shore leave	by Nancy Johnson	P 55
Beauty is in the Soul	by Pac Deacon	P 100

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ScoTpress - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Janet Quarton & Shona

Hello, and welcome to Log Entries 81.

Our featured authors this time are Sandy Catchick; Krysia Baczala, whose story 'Doubt' was Highly Commended in the fiction competition at SOL III; and Nancy Johnson, from the United States, with her first story for us.

In this issue we also bring you 'The Seven Ages of Fan', the script for the Fancy Dress winning entry at Rec-Con; I'm not going to say which stage we've reached, but I'm sure you'll all recognise your own symptoms.

Submissions are very healthy at the moment so we hope to have Log Entries 82 and 83 out in time for Frontiers Convention at the beginning of May. We do try not to hold material for too long, but it does take a while to get stories typed up and we also try to balance the stories we put in each zine. Do keep the submissions coming in - Log Entries 100 is getting closer.

Make It So 3, our Next Generation zine, will also be ready soon, and the IDIC zines are also coming along well. IDIC LOG 1 is now available, and 2 and 3 are under way. You can receive up-to-date sales lists on both IDIC and Scotpress zines by leaving an SAE with Sheila.

Valerie

We welcome submissions of fiction, poetry and artwork for Scotpress zines; either series-based for Log Entries, or 'Next Generation'-based for Make It So. We are looking for action-adventure stories, preferably with some character inter-relationship. Alternate universe stories are acceptable, but even these should not be movie-based, K/S, or involve the death of main characters, or be primarily about other ships. These are, after all, "The voyages of the Starship Enterprise..."

Submissions may be sent to either -

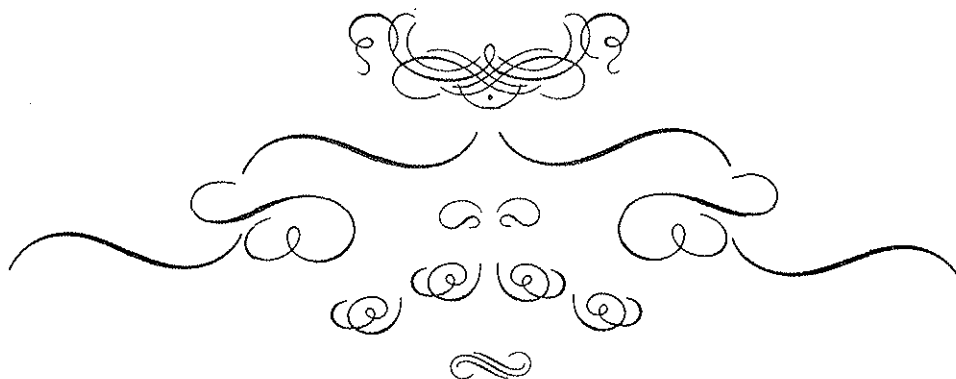
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THE SEVEN AGES OF FAN

All fandom is a world
And all the fen and mundane merely players;
They have their fashions and their fantasies
And all fans in their time play many parts,
Their acts having seven stages. At first the infant,
Soothed into slumber by a tribble's purr;
Then the supporter, badges everywhere,
With shining weekend face, sitting to watch
Or standing up to cheer. And then the gopher
Scurrying to and fro, with woeful tales
Of videos going wrong. Then the writer
With furrowed brow and ready pen to hand,
Whose stapled fanzines are with tall tales crammed,
Full of wise cracks and split infinitives,
To boldly spin a yarn. Then the expert,
Full of strange facts and minute instances;
Precise in speech, sudden and quick in quizzes,
Seeking the winning reputation
Even in the trivia game. The sixth age shifts
Into the keen collector's avid grasp,
With auction list and credit card in hand,
Films, photos, books and tapes piled up on high
In every room; a once big bank account
Shrunk to an overdraft. Last scene of all
That ends this strange eventful history
Is total bankruptcy and deprivation.
No tapes, no books, no films - no anything.

Lynette Muir



BITTER-SWEET REVENGE

by

Sandy Catchick

I guess it was because I hadn't been involved the first time - although not many of the crew had; or perhaps it was because I had been so absorbed in my work that I hadn't taken any interest in the recent additions to the crew. Whatever the reason, I was one of the last to notice that something was happening aboard the Enterprise. And it took someone else to make me realise that all was not well. Even then I had no idea just how much trouble was brewing.

It all started quite innocuously. There was a gentle buzz at my door, which I ignored on the assumption that if it was anything important no-one would give up that easily, and if it wasn't important then they'd no right to disturb me.

The buzz sounded again, and in my gruffest voice I yelled, "Go away, I'm busy!" My mind was fixed firmly on the reports I was writing, and which I hoped to finish that evening.

My tone of voice was ignored. I heard my door swoosh open and close again just as quickly, with no more than a hint of movement. I wrongly assumed it had to be Spock. After all, that Vulcan was the only man aboard I knew who would not appreciate that my tone of voice as well as my words really meant "Get lost!" Well, the Vulcan would have to wait. In fact, he excelled at waiting. I got some satisfaction from that thought as I continued to write. I knew he wouldn't object, but would wait patiently until I was ready. That was his nature. Only, as I say, it wasn't Spock.

It was therefore quite a shock for me when a female voice spoke from directly behind me. "Excuse me, Doctor. I don't wish to disturb you, but I am due back on duty any minute now."

Well, I don't mind keeping a Vulcan waiting, at least, not that particular Vulcan. In fact, it's kind of fun keeping Spock waiting, especially on those rare occasions when he really does want to say something urgently, but is too polite to interrupt me. Such opportunities are too infrequent to be missed. I don't think, however, that even I would have the gall to keep Spock's father waiting. After all, he didn't become an ambassador for nothing.

But this was even worse. My reputation as a gallant Southern gentleman is pretty important to a man of my age. It really wouldn't do it any good to keep a lady waiting, and certainly not one as pretty as Uhura. I didn't need to turn round to recognise the sing-song lilt in her voice.

I turned and stood, bowing deeply and doffing an imaginary hat. My theatrics were rewarded with a bright smile which faded as soon as I opened my big mouth and said,

"I'm sorry, Uhura. I thought you were Spock."

I couldn't imagine why that should upset her - she knew how much I enjoyed teasing him. Her first words explained her reaction,

but gave me little idea of just what was going on.

"Yes, Doctor, I know how much you enjoy teasing Spock. I think he could do with some of that teasing right now. Or more correctly, I think he could use a friend." She added only one word - "Please!" - before bolting out of the door.

I rushed after her, but the corridor was empty when I got there. That meant she must have moved quickly when she left - I wasn't that slow, even if I was getting on a bit.

Now what could have brought that on? Uhura wasn't one to get excited over nothing. But why would Spock need a friend? Not that he had many - just Jim and me. And then at times it was really just Jim. That was because Spock and I were both too stubborn to admit our friendship openly, even if we knew it existed. Uhura knew that as well as anyone. If Spock needed a friend, why choose me and not Jim? And why did Spock need a friend?

Still, I couldn't ignore her comment. She obviously was concerned for our Vulcan First officer. She was a practical woman, so there had to be something in it.

I strolled down to Spock's quarters and buzzed for entrance. His voice said, "Come!" in its usual even tones. I nodded as I walked in, and looked carefully around his quarters, seeking some kind of clue. There was nothing amiss. Everything looked to be in its place. It didn't take long to complete my inspection. Spock didn't have many possessions.

He was still looking at me when my gaze returned to him. It dawned on me that I'd been caught flat-footed, without any excuse for my visit. Perhaps that was it - Uhura had set me up for him. But if so he didn't take the bait, just sat there watching me. He obviously wasn't going to break the silence, which was becoming uncomfortable - for me, at least. My mind began to operate again.

"Uh, hi, Spock. I've just finished the last of my medical reports, and I wondered if you'd join me for a cup of coffee or something to celebrate? It's been over two weeks since I locked myself away with all that work, and I could use some company." It wasn't the most brilliant of ideas, but it did have the merit of making me seem the one in need of company. I knew if he thought I'd come to help him I'd get nowhere.

He raised an eyebrow and I could tell he was surprised by my request, but he hid it well as he replied, "Two weeks, five days and fourteen hours, to be precise."

"Pardon?"

"Two weeks, five days and fourteen hours since you started work on those reports, Doctor."

"Oh," I said weakly. However normal it might be for a Vulcan to be so precise, there were still times when I was amazed by the lengths he would go to to be exact in quoting facts and figures. This time it was kind of nice to realise he had noted exactly how long I'd been missing. Or was Uhura right? Had he kept count of the time I'd been working because he wanted to talk to me? If so, then the rec room was not the best place, as he'd never talk in the open, in front of other members of the crew. But I was too late. He'd already risen to his feet in a single fluid movement.

"After you, Doctor," he said precisely.

I found myself leading the way into the corridor. We moved along in companionable silence. At least, I found it companionable. It's hard to tell what that Vulcan is thinking, unless he's ill, or unless he wants you to know, which is not a frequent occurrence. I knew only that he didn't come reluctantly.

The rec room was fairly crowded, but we got ourselves a table in the far corner. Spock took the wall seat so that he could watch everything that was going on, something he did habitually. I got myself a coffee, and a juice for him. After all, it had been my idea. We sat in silence and he sipped his juice while I alternately blew on my coffee and then gulped some noisily.

"That's not very logical, Doctor," he said suddenly.

I guess my mind was still on the problem of finding out why Spock would need a friend, because my answer didn't sound too intelligent even to my own ears. "What's illogical about drinking coffee?" I asked.

"Drinking poison is never logical, Doctor. However, I was referring to your blowing your germs into the poison and then gulping it down with a large portion of air that the Human digestive system was not built to cope with."

"If you want to comment on my drinking habits I'll go and sit somewhere else, Spock," I said lightly.

I wasn't expecting his reaction, and it made me realise just how right Uhura had been. He put out a hand to restrain me, and then let it fall back into his lap as he said very quietly indeed, "I did not mean to offend."

He couldn't meet my eyes when I cut in, "Spock, I was only joking. It was meant to tease you."

His response was almost inaudible. "It would seem that I have lost my sense of humour too, Doctor."

I had to file that comment away in the back of my mind for the time being, together with the fact that my very private Vulcan, who avoided personal contact almost as much as the plague, had put his hand on mine to stop me leaving, even if it was only for a fraction of a second, because just then the rec room doors opened and a noisy group of people entered.

It took me a few moments to realise that one of them was Jim Kirk. My brain started moving into top gear as I realised that first, Jim was not the centre of attention, but was among the group surrounding a handsome young man I'd never seen before. Second, I digested the fact that Spock was sitting quietly next to me, a stone statue. Last, it dawned on me that Jim Kirk, his best friend, was excitedly enjoying the company of another, a very Human companion. I could guess why Spock said he'd lost his sense of humour 'too'. Worse still, I shared his sense of loss.

By the time I turned to look at Spock a very heavy weight had settled in the pit of my stomach, and alarm bells were ringing in every thought and instinct I found running through the thing I call my brain. But this time Spock met my gaze directly. His brown eyes were unreadable, and that Vulcan mask of his was firmly in place. I

had to admire his courage, because he knew what I was thinking and he didn't run from it, or from me. In fact he stayed until I finished my coffee, nodded what was for him a very definite 'thank you' and then walked with dignity from the rec room. I could only guess how much it cost him not to look back at Kirk as he left. I was certain that Jim hadn't noticed him, and I was equally certain that the eagle-eyed Vulcan couldn't possibly have missed the enjoyment radiating from Jim's face in the presence of the young lieutenant.

Unfortunately, much as I admired Spock for his courage and self control, I could not match either. I looked back as I left the rec room. Jim didn't notice me either. He was far too absorbed with his new friend. I felt a pang of jealousy rise within me as I entered the cool quiet of the corridor. I didn't see anyone as I walked back to my quarters, but I knew several people passed me. If any of them did speak, it didn't register.

My mind was a whirr of jumbled thoughts. Who was Jim's new friend? How had he caught the Captain's attention so quickly and so fully? Why had I been too busy to notice? And if I was feeling upset with Jim being so close to this guy, and I'd just noticed his existence, how must Spock be feeling when he'd watched the friendship develop in the last few weeks?

Worst of all, I was Human. I'd had friends and lost friends before, even if it still hurt. Spock had never had a friend before Jim Kirk. It had taken him a long, long time to let his barriers down enough to let Jim in. I didn't want to contemplate how far it could push Spock back into his shell if Jim let him down now. Somehow I didn't think he'd recover from a blow like that, not even with his courage. But Jim knew him better than I did. He knew how vulnerable Spock was beneath that cool exterior. Surely Jim would never repay the Vulcan's loyalty and friendship like that?

But the unthinkable was happening before my very eyes. Uhura saw it, and shared my concern at it. But she and I were lone voices. Like John the Baptist we were calling in the wilderness, a wilderness of people who had fallen under the spell of our new navigator. Even Spock, for all his withdrawal symptoms, appeared to make allowances for the man that he'd never made for anyone else I could remember.

That was why it was yours truly and not that cool, logical Vulcan who was the first to lose his temper over our new friend. Two weeks had passed since Spock and I had shared that drink together. Two weeks in which I'd seen neither hide nor hair of Jim, and very little of Spock, who alternated being on duty with being in his cabin, and no longer ventured out to the rec room. I was missing Jim, and though I'd not like to admit it openly I was missing that stoic Vulcan too. I was growing less and less fond of the newcomer, even though I knew nothing about him. I've never said I was a logical man, and Human likes and dislikes are not always - or even often - based on fact. Besides, you can't teach an old dog new tricks - like learning to like young new whippersnappers.

Things just worked out so that Jim, Spock and I all met up in the corridor on deck 5. Spock nodded amicably and Jim stopped, looking pretty guilty to me, and said,

"Spock, I haven't seen you properly for a while. How about a

game of chess tonight? You're welcome to join Chris and me, you know. I know it's not your kind of entertainment, but there is so much to discuss, to make up for. You are sure you understand?"

The Vulcan replied, "I understand, Captain. I too regret what happened. But for me there is no logic in trying to change it. What is, is. He and I are not alike. His idea of entertainment is much like his brother's, and I neither understand nor appreciate it. I would be pleased to play a game of chess, though, Captain."

Kirk grinned happily. "That's great, Spock. See you later, then. I mustn't keep Chris waiting - there's still so much I've got to tell him."

Jim suddenly spotted me. "Oh, Bones. Why don't you come and join us? You haven't met Chris, have you?"

I squashed my immediate thought - *No; and I don't want to* - as being childish, but I managed little better at a second attempt. "No, Jim. I'll be along later. Don't you worry about me."

I didn't mean for him to take me literally when I said not to worry about me. Spock, perhaps, but not Jim. I was pretty hurt therefore when Jim turned and said,

"See you later, then. Must dash."

Spock was looking at me oddly. I realised he'd seen the hurt in me, even if Jim hadn't. His words confirmed this. "Do not take it to heart, Doctor. He has his reasons. It will take him time to adjust."

Well, Spock might be able to take it all philosophically, but I couldn't.

"Jim's my friend, and I don't like to see him taken away without putting up some kind of a fight."

"How do you propose to fight, Doctor?" he asked me practically.

I looked at him, and didn't care that my anger was plain to see. "I'll fight him any way and every way I can!"

"How?" he asked again. Then with a sigh he added, "One can fight flesh and blood, but one cannot fight a memory."

With that cryptic statement he disappeared into his cabin, leaving me to stare after him with anger, frustration and a real sense of fear fighting for victory on my face. The last won, and I found myself following Jim to find out just who it was I'd be fighting to win Jim back. I found it hard to believe that Spock could give Jim up without a fight. I wanted to know what he'd meant by fighting a memory.

It didn't take me long to find out. As I joined the crowd around Jim and the new man, Chris, I too felt a little of his charisma. He was young, good looking, full of fun, and had that devil-may-care attitude that pirates and con-men alike have used to win support over the centuries. 'A swashbuckler' was the ancient term that came to mind, perhaps because it was Sulu, our resident swordsman, who enlightened me.

"Don't you know who he is, Doctor?" he asked me in some surprise.

"No," I sighed. "I guess I'm the only person who's been too busy working to notice the arrival of our latest heart-throb."

Some of my bitterness must have shown through, even to Sulu, because he said, "Don't take it so seriously. You don't know how lucky we are to have the chance to make it up to him. You weren't here then, of course. The Captain was, and I was, and Spock and Scotty too. We're very lucky that he doesn't hold a grudge. He wants to follow in his brother's footsteps and take up where he left off. It's wonderful how he and the Captain hit it off so perfectly, just like they did."

"Who are you talking about?" I asked in all innocence.

"Why, Gary. Gary Mitchell, Doctor. This is Christopher Mitchell, his younger brother."

I stood there with my mouth open, looking and feeling like an idiot, glad that only Sulu had noticed me.

"Are you okay, Doctor?" he asked solicitously.

"Yes," I said, and even as I said it I knew I lied. But now I understood. Gary Mitchell had been the navigator when Jim first took command of the Enterprise. He had also been Jim Kirk's best friend. Their mission had taken them to the barrier at the edge of the galaxy. Gary, with his high ESP rating, had been one of the few people affected by the barrier's energy. The energy there had somehow been attracted to Espers, people with high extrasensory perception. Gary had been knocked out. When he'd recovered the most noticeable change had been his eyes, which had turned to pure silver. But he had mutated into something inhuman, something with superhuman powers. Something so powerful that to it Humans were an irritant to be squashed.

Spock, in his unemotional way, had been the first to recognise the danger and had advised Jim to kill Mitchell before that became impossible. The Captain, being only Human, had refused to kill his friend, favouring the idea of abandoning him at an isolated lithium cracking station, where he could live out his life without threatening the Human race.

But Jim had left it too long. His compassion had resulted in the death of Lee Kelso, strangled by Gary. Mitchell had then broken out of his security cell, knocked out Kirk and Spock, and had escaped with Dr. Dehner, the ship's psychologist, another Esper who it turned out had also been changed by the barrier. Jim was woken by Dr. Piper, and insisting that the doctor did not revive Spock until it was too late for the Vulcan to follow, had set off alone after Gary. With Dr. Dehner's help, Jim had killed his best friend.

It was all in the ship's log, and I knew I'd have to re-read it. Even from what little I remembered I could appreciate why Jim would want to make it up to Gary's brother. It had not been Mitchell's fault that he had a high ESP rating, and was therefore the one to be changed. Jim still regretted having to kill him.

I could see why Sulu would want to help make Chris Mitchell feel at home, and even why Spock, the logician, could see no point in trying to fight a memory. What I could not see was why Chris

Mitchell, a mere Human, should forgive Jim, or Spock for that matter, since the Vulcan had been the first to recommend killing Gary, and Jim had actually done it.

Vulcans might not hold grudges, and I knew from personal experience that Spock would forgive and forget given even half a chance to do so. But a Human forgiving and forgetting the death of his brother, unless he was a religious man - and Chris Mitchell's behaviour made me discount that immediately - did not sit right with me. It didn't gel, somehow.

Spock was right about one thing, though. It would be a lot easier fighting flesh and blood than fighting a memory. It made me realise just how far that Vulcan had come since I'd first known him, and how much he and I could lose if we lost Jim to Christopher Mitchell.

It was that thought that made me lose my temper when Mitchell finally called a halt to their socialising at around 2.00 a.m. He said goodnight to Jim, slapped him on the back, and said he'd better turn in. Jim said he'd better turn in too if he was going to get up in time for duty at 8.00 a.m. I let Chris go, and then I laid into Jim with mental fists flying.

"Haven't you forgotten something?" I asked, my anger tightening my throat and making the question come out rather flat.

Jim looked around questioningly. "I don't think so, Bones," he said, smiling contentedly.

"What about Spock and that game of chess?"

Jim yawned. "It's a bit late now. He'll have gone to bed if he's got any sense. He's on duty at 8.00 a.m. too, you know."

"No doubt he would have gone to bed if he had any sense. But I know, and you know if you'd let yourself think straight for a minute, that if you said you'd play a game of chess with him tonight, he'd sit and wait for you until the cows came home."

I was so angry that I raised my voice, and I could feel it breaking with pent-up emotion. Sulu looked at me in some surprise, but I caught sight of a pair of bright brown eyes, beautiful eyes, that echoed every word I'd said.

Uhura had stayed up too. She was very quiet when she spoke, but her words had more effect than mine for all that.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, Captain, promising Mr. Spock a game of chess and keeping him waiting all this time. When has he ever broken a promise to you, or acted in anything but a courteous manner? I think you're getting carried away with daydreams. It's about time you remembered your responsibilities, not just to Mr. Mitchell but to the whole crew of this Starship. And that includes the First Officer, whether or not he's a Vulcan with the patience of Job, and whether or not he's your personal friend. Goodnight... Captain."

Those last words were said in such a way that I was left in no doubt that Uhura was questioning his right to the title. Luckily I was the only one who'd stayed long enough to hear.

To give Jim his due he turned red and groaned. I heard his

whisper, "Spock! I'm sorry, Spock. But I know you understand."

I looked him right in the eye and I let him have it dead centre. "Oh, Spock understands, all right. You taught him that. How to feel. How to lower his barriers. How to leave himself wide open, vulnerable. You taught him the good things, and now you want to teach him how easy it is to be hurt, to lose a friend, to feel pain, and jealousy, and anguish."

I could see that Jim didn't quite believe me.

"You're right, Jim. Those are my words, not Spock's. I'm probably doing him an injustice, because he's too gentle a being to feel some of the things I could imagine for him. But Uhura's right. You have a duty to him, not only as his Captain but as the man who tore down his barriers, layer by layer. You can't just leave him defenceless and run off with someone else just because your conscience is pricking. He might not admit it, but he does have feelings, and he is missing you. Couldn't you spend just a little more time with him? He doesn't deserve your rejection, Jim. Not like this."

My barbs went home, I could tell. "Is that how he sees it?" Jim asked.

"Why don't you ask him?" I said. "More to the point, if you'd spent a bit more time with him you might know the answer without asking," I added maliciously. Jim did need to see the error of his ways, and I couldn't see Spock as the man to drive home the lesson.

Jim and I walked along the corridor together, and I could see him looking at me out of the corner of his eye. But I didn't speak again. I only stayed with him to make sure he didn't chicken out and go to bed. I think he knew that. I was glad I'd done it, though, when he knocked gently on Spock's door, on the basis that the buzzer would wake him if he was asleep, and Spock opened it immediately, as though he'd been waiting for that tap all night - which he probably had.

"We got a bit carried away," I said to Spock in explanation, since Jim was obviously feeling guilty from the way he started at Spock's quick response, and since it only seemed fair that someone should explain or apologise. "We didn't realise what time it was."

"Do you still wish to play?" Spock asked politely. The damn fool didn't realise he was giving Jim a chance to refuse. Or perhaps he felt obliged to ask out of his inbred sense of courtesy.

Jim shuffled a bit, so I dug him in the ribs with my elbow - unobtrusively, of course, but none too gently for all that. I didn't want Spock to think Jim was acting under pressure, though. That silver tongue came to Jim's rescue.

"Uh, yes, Spock. I've been looking forward to this game for quite a while. I've missed playing with you."

"Indeed," said the Vulcan, non-committally, but I could see the muscles in his back relax at this, and I only then realised how much it meant to him, and just how much both Jim and I took him and his so well hidden feelings for granted.

He was, as usual, more caring of Human feelings than we ever were of either Human or Vulcan ones. "Would you like to stay also,

Doctor?" he asked formally. "We could play cards rather than chess."

I knew he hated cards, considering them a game of chance rather than skill, and I knew he'd prefer Jim to himself. But that's the kind of man he is under that hard exterior, a big softy with a heart of gold. He didn't want to hurt my feelings.

"Thanks, Spock, but I could do with a good night's sleep. You two battle it out and maybe I'll play the winner tomorrow."

I let myself out and wandered back to my cabin. I was not a happy man. I might have solved Spock's problem temporarily, but what about the long term? And what about Chris Mitchell? I went to sleep wondering about one Lieutenant Christopher Craig Mitchell.

It didn't surprise me to learn that Spock had won the game. First, Jim had not been at his best at 2.00 a.m. Second, when Spock was at his most Vulcan it was impossible to psyche him out, and he played like the freshly overhauled computer I was apt to call him. I determined to challenge him to a game while he was on duty on the bridge. That would give me a good excuse to see Mitchell at work.

I wandered onto the bridge and unobtrusively moved from station to station, watching each person in turn and exchanging a few words with each. Finally I strolled over to Mitchell and watched him at work. I could see him getting annoyed as I continued to stand there silently.

Eventually he said, "What is it, Doctor?"

I knew from the way he said it that his charm was all a put-on, not natural. Two could play at that game. In my best Southern drawl I said, "Y'all don't pay no mind to me. I'm just taking a break from sickbay. I'm fascinated by all this equipment."

I chanced a quick look at Spock's face, having used his favourite word to annoy him on many occasions. The Vulcan's mind was on his work, and he didn't appear to have noticed.

I continued to watch over Mitchell's shoulder, using the kind of tactics I had previously practiced on Spock. While the Vulcan would ignore me, at least on the surface, I could tell Mitchell was becoming agitated. There was something furtive in his manner. I wished I knew enough about the equipment to identify what was wrong, but machines were not my strong point. People were. Mitchell was up to something. The question was, what? I decided to push the only advantage I had, the fact that he didn't like me being there. I leaned forward. Abruptly he got up and made an excuse to leave the bridge.

Jim looked up and told me not to bother Chris like that. I did my, "Who, me?" routine. Spock joined in to say that I was frequently irritating although I really didn't set out to be - a backhanded compliment if ever I heard one. Jim laughed, and without Mitchell's presence it seemed like old times. When I turned to leave the bridge I felt someone's eyes on me and turned to catch a strange, wistful expression in Spock's eyes that was immediately eradicated when he realised I'd turned. It reminded me of what had brought me to the bridge in the first place.

"You owe me a game of chess, Mr. Spock," I said, pointing my finger at him.

He didn't agree without an argument, which satisfied me that he was okay, but when I did play him that night I was not so sure.

I'd never seen him look so remote or so cold since I'd got to know him, and yet I could tell he wanted me to stay. It was almost as though, without Jim there to translate his feelings into words, he couldn't or wouldn't express himself. Needless to say, he beat me fair and square - and three games to nil after I persuaded him it was only fair to give me a chance to win back my honour. It didn't take much to persuade him, since he obviously wanted the company. But since he didn't say a word, except yes and no, from the moment I entered his quarters, I found it impossible to stay for more than a few hours. I left him with a mixed sense of regret and relief.

Two months went by, months in which things did little more than tick over. Jim spent most of his time with Mitchell, Spock spent most of his time in his quarters, and I found myself spending more and more time with Scotty. Like Uhura, Scotty had taken an instant dislike to Mitchell because of what his presence was doing to our resident Vulcan's relationship with Jim. That was in spite of the fact that he had known Gary Mitchell. He called Chris a cocky young fool, and frequently referred to his spoiling a special partnership, or moving in where he wasn't wanted. I'd never realised just how fond he was of that pointy-eared alien. But like Spock himself, Scotty was a man of few words, and didn't often express his inner feelings, except where his engines were concerned.

Like Uhura and myself Scotty made a point of spending some of his free time with Spock. The Vulcan would receive us politely and listen to what we had to say, but he did not unwind with us as he used to with Jim, and he wouldn't come and join us in the rec room. He'd only see us if we visited him. Even then I think it was purely because of his inbred good manners. He never relaxed his Vulcan mask of control. He worked non-stop when on duty, and kept to himself when off duty.

It began to tell on him. He grew thin and gaunt, and he couldn't afford to lose the weight. I became concerned for his health. He understood my concern, because he let me put him on a high protein diet, which meant him visiting sickbay every day for food supplements, something he would normally avoid at all costs. But his health didn't improve. He assured me that Vulcans could operate for months as he was doing - but I never realised just what he was doing. Not then.

It was his state of health that made me insist that Spock was among the people taking shore leave when we had a chance for R&R on Starbase 21. Jim was taking his leave with Chris. That upset me so much that I had him in to see me and told him a few home truths about what he was doing to Spock. To my amazement he just couldn't see it. He wasn't ignoring Spock. The Vulcan was still his friend. Only he and Spock had all the time in the world; Chris would be with them only a short time, and he wanted to use that time to make it up to him. He owed it to Gary. Spock would understand. They both knew that Chris would be promoted off the Enterprise before too long, and then he and Spock would still have each other. There was no reason for me to be concerned.

No reason for me to be concerned! I ask you! I was wondering if Jim's eyesight wasn't in need of some repair. Hadn't he seen Spock's condition deteriorating? I wasn't about to give up.

"If Spock lasts that long, of course," I said.

That worried him at least. "What's wrong with him?" he asked sharply.

"He's run down physically, strained, overtired."

"I'll have a word with him," he said.

"He needs more than a word, Jim. He needs your company," I emphasised.

Jim laughed. "When have you ever known Spock to want shore leave?" he asked. "Did he request leave?"

I had to admit that he hadn't. Jim decided it was I who needed the break. In the end I also had to admit that Spock hadn't complained about the time he was spending with Chris. He nodded in satisfaction. But I had the last word for all that.

"When have you ever heard Spock complain? He always minimises his hurts."

The break in Jim's command stride told me I'd hit home, but he still beamed down with Chris.

Spock fought my order to take R&R. Eventually he succumbed to my tirade of abuse and my threat of a medical order, and agreed to beam down. But he wouldn't let me, or Scotty, go with him. I was partly appeased by the fact that he'd gone. But I shouldn't have been.

He came back looking more strained than ever. We'd only been granted a 5-day stopover. I couldn't imagine what he'd been doing with his free time to get into such a state in such a short time. No doubt worrying about the Captain. I was just wondering how to broach the subject of getting him down to sickbay when Jim and Chris came onto the bridge together, laughing. Jim stopped in his tracks and looked the Vulcan up and down as though he'd only just seen him for the first time in months. Perhaps it was the first time he'd taken a good look at Spock since Chris had arrived.

"Spock, is anything wrong? You look terrible," he said.

"I am a little tired," admitted the Vulcan.

My heart went out to him, knowing as I did that he wouldn't have admitted even that to anyone else. Jim knew it too, and for once he forgot all about Christopher Mitchell.

"Do you want to talk about it? Let's go down to my quarters," suggested Jim. True concern was evident in his voice.

I was just beginning to feel content that Jim had realised his mistake when I glanced over at Mitchell. He was looking at Spock with pure, undisguised hatred in his eyes - unmasked, evil, and very dangerous. I changed my mind abruptly. I wished Jim had not revealed his concern, because up until that moment I don't think Mitchell had taken Spock seriously. He'd just been a piece of

machinery. Now he was an enemy. I realised I'd missed what Jim and Spock were saying; whatever it was, Jim wasn't happy.

"If that's the way it's going to be, Spock, then I'll have to make it an order. You're to report to sickbay immediately."

Spock turned towards his console and Jim, obviously fearing he was being ignored, snapped, "Immediately means right now, Spock"

Spock had been reaching for a switch to turn off his console. I could see that from where I was standing, but Jim couldn't. Spock didn't tell him that. He just straightened, put his hands back down by his sides, and walked towards me. He didn't make any comment, but his eyes held Jim's and they said more than any words could say. They were telling Jim that Spock would always do what Jim wanted him to do - even if, as in this case, he found it illogical. Jim sat down abruptly, and that was the last I saw of him as the turbolift doors closed.

So I got Spock into sickbay without any argument. The trouble was I couldn't find a thing wrong with him. At least, nothing I could put my finger on. He was below par on every physical test I gave him, but it was not by a significant amount. When I turned to the psychological tests he seemed relieved, and I found that worrying, since I'd expected him to balk at those in case they showed up his feelings about Christopher Mitchell. Either his control held, or my instruments just weren't up to Vulcan psychology, because the tests came out perfect.

"Do not look so surprised, Doctor. I assure you there is nothing wrong with me." He'd been about to add something, but changed his mind; I saw the shutters drop over his eyes and knew there was no point in asking.

Jim asked to see the results, but the only advice I could offer him was to spend a bit more time with Spock and help him to relax. Jim didn't seem willing to do that.

Just over a week later Spock walked into sickbay of his own accord. Behind the tiredness and strain I could sense an air of suppressed excitement in him. Typically, he came straight to the point.

"Doctor, I need your assistance in something that is not very ethical."

Boy oh boy! That took the wind out of my sails. Our correct, moral Vulcan asking me to do something unethical when he wouldn't so much as leave a door ajar if there was a notice on it saying 'Please shut this door.' This was one for the books.

"Okay, Spock. Let's have it," I said.

He looked perplexed. "Have what, Doctor?" he asked at last.

"Let's hear what you've got to say," I elaborated. For once my curiosity got the better of my impatience, and I didn't take him to task for being so literal.

It took him several minutes to answer me, but I could see he was building up to it, so I bit my tongue to prevent myself from

saying the things that came to mind, things that would send him packing before he'd even started. I waited. I'm a pretty curious guy myself, you know. It's not only Vulcan scientists who admit to curiosity - it's a well-know motivator among Humans, too. The interesting thing about curiosity as a motivator is that it provides its own reward. The more you discover the more you want to learn, and so you are motivated to go on asking.

He steepled and unsteeped his fingers. Eventually he asked. I could see what it cost him to do so. It was obvious to me that a part of him didn't think he should be asking, and I guessed it was his dominant, Vulcan side that didn't like the idea by the amount of effort it took for him to reach a decision. I was pleased when the Human side won, but I could tell he was fighting himself and not really concentrating on me when he finally verbalised the request.

"I wish you to use your medical override to obtain entry to someone's personal classified information," he stated.

"No!"

I shouted the word at him without really thinking it through. It was a gut reaction, my famous emotion getting the better of me when I was asked to do something that went against the grain.

Spock stood at once. Only the slight droop to his shoulders, more obvious because he had been reduced to little more than skin and bone, indicated that my answer was a blow to him. That, on top of the fact that he must have wrestled with the moral arguments far longer than I, and reached the conclusion that in this instance what he proposed was worth it, made me rethink.

"Wait!" I said quickly. "Let me think about this, will you?"

He stopped, but remained standing. Again I got the impression that a part of him would have preferred me to say no. That intrigued me.

"What information are you after?" I asked.

"I do not know, Doctor."

That astounded me. It didn't sound too logical.

"Spock, if you don't know what you want to find out, then how do you know it is worth the risk of breaking in to personal classified information? That's not logical, and it doesn't sound like you. Are you sure you're not just overstrained, pulled by your emotions? This is something new for you, isn't it?"

"It is worth the risk, Doctor, because it is the only avenue left open to me. It is therefore logical that I explore it."

Needless to say he ignored all my personal questions and didn't admit to being emotionally involved. What he said did make a kind of sense, if you knew what he was talking about. What avenues had he explored that made him think this was the only one left and therefore worth pursuing? I had to find out.

"What exactly do you want me to do?"

"I wish you to use your medical override to gain access to the Starfleet medical records of Lt. Christopher Craig Mitchell."

"But I can't do that, Spock."

He started walking towards the door, believing that I refused to do it for ethical reasons. He couldn't be further from the truth. My ethics were very important to me; they included protecting my Captain and my First Officer from threat or harm - and Mr. Mitchell epitomised both.

"Hang on, Spock. I don't mean I don't want to do it. What I mean is, it's not possible to do it. Those records are kept in the Surgeon-General's office. There's no way I could get at them. My override would be useless."

Spock turned round, eyebrow on the rise, and I swear he was laughing at me inside, although I only caught the tiniest of gleams in his eyes. In his present condition that was enough to transform him from looking half-dead to looking very much alive.

"Do you believe me so illogical that I would ask you to do the impossible, Doctor?" he asked mildly.

He'd got me there. But what he asked was impossible. Only the more I thought about it the more I knew that if there was even a slim chance of reading Chris Mitchell's file, then I wanted that chance - at any cost, because my every instinct told me that Mitchell was up to no good. That was fine for me, but it didn't explain Spock's reason.

Then I knew I'd been right. Spock had never felt jealousy before. It was a new emotion, and I knew from experience a very strong one. I'd had a touch of it when Jim and Spock had first become such good friends, but had overcome it when I'd realised that I'd gained two friends rather than lost one. But as a Human I was equipped to deal with such a strong emotion; Spock wasn't. It must be driving him crazy. So much so that he'd throw logic, and his career, out of the window to get back at Chris Mitchell. Studying Spock handling a bout of jealousy would be quite something. My professional interest was aroused. Now I'm not stupid. When opportunity knocks there's no point in hiding from it.

"I'll tell you what, Spock. I'll do a deal with you. I'll give you the medical override in return for your telling me exactly what you've been... thinking ever since Mitchell came on board." I'd almost said 'feeling', but didn't want to scare him off. He could be pretty touchy about his private thoughts, let alone feelings.

"Agreed," he said instantly, without hesitation.

He might be feeling good old Human jealousy, but he still had a long way to go in learning about Human deviousness. Not that he wasn't devious in his own way, but his was more a matter of leaving things unsaid, or leading you in the wrong direction. I guess it never even occurred to him that I might have agreed even if he'd said no to my deal. I was grateful for that. Now I'd get two things I'd wanted - an insight into Spock's reactions, and a look at Chris Mitchell's file.

But I'd done Spock an injustice. Not for the first time I'd assumed Human reactions for him, when his responses had been purely Vulcan, if tempered by his Human half.

I sat him down and made him take a glass of juice. He looked

like he needed it. Then I asked him what he'd been thinking since Mitchell arrived on the scene. It was quite a story. He was quite a man.

Spock had been the first to realise that the new navigator, Christopher Mitchell, was Gary's brother. He had personally broken the news to Jim to spare the Captain the shock of discovering it for himself when alone. Jim had been shaken. Then he'd recovered and realised that it could be a chance to make up in some small way for the loss of Gary. Jim appreciated that nothing could completely assuage the loss of a friend or a brother, but he had to try to mitigate that loss. Jim still felt guilty over Gary's death. Spock understood, but as a Vulcan he could see that Gary had had to die. His death was logical, and the Vulcan had no regrets. But Jim could never see it that way - and he had been the one to actually pull the trigger.

Spock had therefore seen only hope in Chris's arrival at first. He looked and acted like Gary. Jim and he hit it off straight away. Chris had explained that he saw the Enterprise as a stepping-stone in his career, and was awaiting an opportunity for promotion onto another ship.

Jim and Spock had discussed the situation at length, and agreed that Jim should spend as much time as possible with Chris while he had the opportunity to do so. Spock hoped this would assist Jim in getting over his feelings of guilt. But Spock had studied Chris. Initially this had been to discover how much alike he and Gary really were, since Spock had never understood the impetuous Gary Mitchell, and welcomed an opportunity to try and understand him through his brother. Instead his observations and analysis had led him to one inescapable conclusion: Chris Mitchell had only one motive for all his actions - revenge.

From the moment Spock had come to that conclusion he had started to research Mitchell's background to find some kind of proof to give Jim. He didn't want to squash Jim's hopes without factual evidence. He was not sure of his conclusion, because revenge was not a motive he truly understood, although he had observed its effects on the behaviour of others.

Whenever he was off duty he used his computer terminal to assist in his search for evidence. He had followed clue after clue without discovering anything conclusive. Then on Starbase 21, with its special links to Starfleet Headquarters, he'd found something that led him to believe Chris had undergone psychiatric treatment after Gary had died. He had, not surprisingly, found all routes to that information blocked. Then he'd managed to break into the Surgeon-General's computer and had traced the file he needed to access. He had proved its existence. The problem was, it was security coded in such a way that only a qualified doctor could gain access. That was when he'd concluded that he had to enlist my help.

So much for my theories of jealousy driving Spock beyond even Vulcan endurance. Huh! Instead of spending his night worrying about Chris homing in on his own friendship with Jim, he'd spent them researching into ways of protecting his friend from possible hurt. How wrong could one get? But I still couldn't believe Spock hadn't felt any pangs of jealousy. I had to ask. I had to be sure. The only way to find out was to ask a direct question, because Spock would not lie, although he might not answer.

"Spock, weren't you even a little bit afraid of losing Jim to Chris?"

"Losing Jim?"

"Yes. I mean, afraid of Jim becoming such good friends with Chris that you'd take second place. You know, like Jim spending all his time with Chris. You said yourself that it was impossible to fight a memory. Jim is no longer playing chess, or..."

My words drifted off. It was quite obvious that such thoughts had never occurred to him. Tired as he was, he was pretty easy to read, if you knew what to look for. His eyes were a picture of confusion.

"No," he said simply.

"How could you be so sure?"

He looked at me as though I was the one who was overstrained, too tired to think straight. "Jim told me a long time ago that we would always be friends."

For him it was that simple. At times I found it unbelievable that such a complex, intelligent person could be so naive. He'd known enough of us Humans to realise that we rarely did what we said. But his faith was touching - and solid as a rock. Jim had told him, so it must be so. I prayed then that Jim would never let him down. Such total trust would be a terrible thing to shatter.

He could see that I didn't quite believe him, and he wanted me to understand. He touched a hand to his head.

"Jim is here, Doctor. He has not changed. His friendship has not lessened. If there was a change I would know."

"You know, that's just what Jim told me before we went down to Starbase 21. He said you understood, and were not upset. But I didn't believe him then."

"Why not?"

"Because that's not a normal situation. I don't know of anyone else who could accept their friend spending time with another and not feel threatened by it. But then, I didn't think about that special link between you two."

He changed the subject immediately. Our conversation was getting too personal. I'd been lucky that he'd shared as much as he had.

"What now?" he asked.

I realised I'd already kept him talking too long. He was far too tired to go through verbal cross-questioning, and lowering his personal barriers enough to discuss his own thinking would have used up a lot of energy he could ill afford to lose at the moment.

"It's my turn now, Spock. Let's go and do some snooping."

"Snooping?" he queried.

"Yes. Reading some illicit information. You should be good at

that, Spock - eating the forbidden fruit. You know the story of the serpent in the Garden of Eden."

I knew he was overtired, close to the limits of his endurance, when he didn't rise to the bait. Not even an eyebrow was raised. But I knew also that he wouldn't rest until he'd read that file.

Spock made breaking into the computer look like child's play, though I knew it was riddled with every conceivable security mechanism. I doubted there was anyone else who could have done it. Spock was exceptional with computers.

When it got to my part - the medical code - he'd already done all the hard work. Spock stood up and let me take over. It took me only seconds to get access to Mitchell's psychiatric records. This was my specialisation. The more I read the longer the cold fingers creeping up my spine reached.

According to the records, Gary's death had driven Chris insane. He'd spent a lot of time in therapy, and eventually had been cleared as fully recovered. That was when he'd applied to Starfleet to become a navigator. His doctor had seen that as a positive step, the first stage to a complete recovery. With all my experience behind me I was positive that it was a first step, but the first step on a trail to revenge. The signs of madness were all still there for anyone who knew how to interpret them.

I let Spock back into the driving seat. "Spock, we've got a maniac aboard this ship," I said very definitely. "We've got to tell Jim."

"Tell me what?" said Jim, coming in behind us.

Those cold fingers turned to ice within me and froze my tongue uselessly in their vice-like grip as I recognised the man by his side. Why did that ultimate weapon, the voice, which I could use to cut and pierce as easily and efficiently as I used a scalpel, let me down in my moment of dire need? Thankfully, Vulcans don't suffer from such Human failings as being caught with their hands in the cookie jar, so to speak.

"Tell you that Lt. Mitchell only came aboard the Enterprise for revenge, Captain," he said calmly.

I don't know whether Jim believed him outright, or whether he'd have asked for the proof Spock had believed necessary, because the question became academic. Christopher Mitchell was quite mad. He possessed that intense strength that sometimes comes with insanity. He pushed Jim heavily into the room. Jim was thrown into me, and the two of us tumbled into a heap on the floor. By the time we untangled ourselves, Mitchell had us covered with a fully operational phaser.

You're probably wondering how I knew it was fully operational. The answer is simple. Where the computer terminal had stood there was just empty space. But I wasn't bothered about a few circuits and a chunk of metal. It was with great relief that I realised that Spock had been untouched by the phaser, which had been set to kill, judging by the extent of the devastation. He remained seated in the chair as though carved from stone. For once I was glad of that cool logic that kept him from acting rashly.

In stark contrast Mitchell's voice cracked with emotion.

"You're too late. All of you. Just like last time. You've left it too long to act. It's ironic, isn't it? Almost a replay. The Vulcan gives you his cool, emotionless advice to kill before it's too late; by the time you decide to follow that advice it already *is* too late."

He ended with a triumphant laugh, a horrible screeching sound that jarred my nerves and caused Spock to cover his ears for a second before he controlled the impulse. But Mitchell wasn't looking at him. His attention and his hate were centred on Jim. "You'll see, Kirk. You'll see!"

Then he was suddenly in control of himself again. He gestured at Spock with the phaser and told Jim, "You go back and play Captain for a while. I'll keep your Vulcan as hostage until we get where we're going."

"And where is that?" I heard myself asking. I didn't think I had anything to lose.

It was Spock who answered. "The Barrier, Doctor. Where Gary Mitchell and James T. Kirk first encountered..."

"Shut up, Spock, and get up!" Mitchell screeched.

Poor Spock didn't understand what he'd said to upset the man, but I knew. Spock had stolen his thunder by outguessing him on the destination. It's not a good idea to upset a madman.

"Up! Get up!" Mitchell yelled again as Spock remained seated.

"Don't antagonise him, Spock," I advised, trying to make him realise that this was one time his logic would not work.

Spock threw me one of those icy looks that do wonders for discipline and go a long way to giving him his undeserved reputation as a cold, unfeeling computer. To me it was like water off a duck's back. I tried again.

"Do as he says, Spock. This is no time to get stubborn."

The familiar eyebrow rose in surprise. "I assure you, Doctor, that I would comply if I could."

My anger turned to alarm at Mitchell aimed the phaser directly at Spock and screamed, "Stand up right now, or I'll shoot you where you are."

"Then you will have to shoot me, Mr. Mitchell. Your first shot made it impossible for me to comply with your order."

Mitchell was not a man to be reasoned with, and perhaps he'd never heard of the Vulcan compulsion to tell the truth. He grabbed Spock by the hair and yanked him out of the chair.

Jim rushed to the rescue, hoping to distract Mitchell and succeeding temporarily. But Spock was in no condition to take advantage of the opportunity. Jim must have thought he'd been trying to distract Mitchell; perhaps he too had forgotten Spock's compulsion to tell the truth. I knew with a sinking feeling that Spock *had* been unable to comply with Mitchell's order. I didn't like to think what that meant.

We ended up pretty much as before, only it was Jim who was covered by the phaser, held unwaveringly and still set to kill. Spock remained where he had fallen.

Mitchell looked at me. "What's wrong with him? And I want the truth."

I took out my scanner and ran it over Spock's body, ignoring the indignant look he gave me. "He's suffering from your phaser blast, Mitchell," I said coldly.

"Get him well, then, Doctor. He's got to be fit for our visit to the Barrier. You get out of here, Kirk. Don't try anything like that again, or you'll regret it."

Jim took one last look at Spock and was somehow reassured, although I don't know how the Vulcan managed to reassure him when I knew what my scanner readings had shown. It was beyond me how he'd sat there all that time when my instruments told me that anyone with that much phaser power aimed at him should at the very least be unconscious, if not dead. But Jim went out unaware of how badly hit Spock was. I didn't enlighten him. I guess my motives were pretty similar to Spock's own. Jim had enough on his plate without added worries.

I knew Spock was bad when he didn't object as I helped him to his feet. He leaned heavily against me, and he weighed a lot more than his slight frame would lead you to believe. By the time we made it to sickbay he was breathing heavily, and I wasn't feeling that good myself. Even Mitchell had concluded that he wasn't faking it.

Mitchell helped me get him on a diagnostic bed, although I saw Spock recoil at the unfamiliar touch, which only caused Mitchell to grin evilly and make a point of manhandling him more than was necessary. After that first move, however, Spock made no further protest. I was sure that was because of his iron control and not because Mitchell's touch had stopped bothering him. In any case, Mitchell lost interest.

The panel readings were really low, and I was not encouraged when he whispered, "Can you give me something, Doctor?"

That was so unusual for him that I became really alarmed. He realised it, because he added, "The Captain will need me fully fit. I do not believe I will be able to achieve a healing trance without assistance."

It was my turn to nod dumbly. It was hardly surprising that he doubted his ability to go into a healing trance. He'd been very low physically even before the phaser blast, and mentally he was exhausted and worn out by weeks of research. I didn't like the idea of giving him something in his current state; I'd have preferred to have him sedated until he'd regained some strength and could go into the trance on his own. But desperate times require desperate measures, and I too was concerned about Jim.

"All right," I agreed reluctantly.

I swear his eyes smiled just for an instant before he closed them and relaxed that desperate control. I knew he didn't dare relax completely, because if he lost consciousness he'd never be able to get into trance quickly. That stubborn streak of his

enabled him to hold on long enough for me to give him a very unethical stim shot, and I watched nervously while the readings fluctuated wildly until they finally levelled out, and I knew he'd made it.

Mitchell stuck to me like glue for the next three days while Spock lay in trance. At night he locked us into sickbay and tied me to my bed so that he could sleep without needing to watch me. Luckily Spock came to in the daytime, and I was able to slap him until he regained consciousness. It took quite a few slaps to bring him round, which bothered me as it was an indication that he was still weak. No doubt he'd pushed himself to come out of it quickly rather than wait for full recovery. A dangerous move, but one he no doubt considered logical when Jim was threatened.

His first sight was of Mitchell watching us gloatingly, and I wondered for a second if Vulcans had bad dreams, and he'd been hoping that Mitchell was just part of a nightmare. It was a pity he was real, I reflected, wondering again if I was just projecting Human needs onto Spock.

After some minutes it became obvious that Spock intended to lie there all day if necessary. Finally Mitchell asked, "Is he okay now, Doc?"

"Doctor McCoy to you," I said grumpily. "And he's not okay. I wouldn't pass him fit for duty. But he's a lot better than he was."

"Can you walk?" Mitchell asked Spock.

That honest streak of his made Spock reply that he believed he could. Before I knew it Mitchell had waved the phaser under Spock's nose and told him to go up to the bridge, because he wanted to see how the Captain was getting on. He smiled as he waved the phaser at me and added, "You too, Doc." There was nothing friendly in that smile, and I had some sympathy for Spock's frequent comment that Humans smile for such diverse reasons that it is difficult to tell if they are being friendly, humorous or antagonistic. I was in no doubt as to where Mitchell's smile fitted.

Jim was prepared for us. I guess he'd had sickbay under observation.

"Glad to see you looking better, Mr. Spock," he said formally.

That fool Vulcan merely nodded and walked over to his station as though this was just another normal duty period. Sulu got out of his way and returned to the helm, replacing his own relief. Spock spent some moments checking his instruments and then announced,

"Three days to the Barrier, Captain."

"Are you sure he's okay, Bones? That wasn't very accurate. He normally quotes everything to the last decimal place," Jim said, only half in jest.

Spock raised an eyebrow and replied on his own behalf. "In this instance that would be inaccurate, Captain. It is precisely three days to contact with the Barrier at present speed."

"Smartass!" I grumbled under my breath, but I had to add, "He

might be his infuriatingly accurate self, Jim, but he is by no means fully recovered."

Jim acknowledged that, but Mitchell butted in. "Enjoy your old home week while you can. Mr. Spock is still my insurance. If anything goes wrong he'll be the first to know, because he'll be the first one I kill."

"What is old home week?" asked Spock, ignoring the threat.

Mitchell was infuriated by Spock's composure. I opened my mouth to tell Spock to look it up later, but Mitchell beat me to it by a mile.

"Shut up, Spock, or I'll kill you now."

This time, he had sense enough to obey.

The three days to the Barrier went surprisingly quickly. Both Spock and I were returned to sickbay each night, locked in and tied to separate beds, me with a rope and Spock with chains. Mitchell was taking no chances. Spock, as usual, took it in his stride, while I found it almost impossible to sleep with my arms tied so uncomfortably. I didn't discover until much later that Spock didn't sleep either, but spent the whole time trying to work out what Mitchell was planning and what - if anything - he could do to forestall him. Spock didn't work it out. That was hardly surprising, as Mitchell's plan was not the work of a logician, but of a madman.

The atmosphere on the bridge became even more tense when the Barrier came in sight on the forward viewscreen.

Mitchell grinned evilly. "How long until we cross?" he asked.

I could see Jim looking at Spock, willing him not to answer. There were times when his honesty was a positive hindrance. This was one of them.

"One hour and ten minutes," replied our personal computer without raising his head from his viewer.

"Good," responded Mitchell ominously.

Mitchell turned to the navigation station, unmanned since he had programmed the Enterprise to go where he wanted and locked the route into the navigation computer, with traps to prevent manual override. Probably Spock could have regained control, given time, but that was rapidly running out and he had not been allowed near navigation.

Mitchell reached under the console and lifted out a little box. He produced two hypodermic syringes, one filled with a green liquid, the other with yellow. My stomach turned over. I didn't recognise either serum, but my imagination provided a lot of possibilities, none I particularly wanted to dwell on.

He came over to me and handed me the the green hypo. "Inject me, Doctor," he said, forgetting the 'Doc' for once. Jim and Spock exchanged a look.

"What is it?" I asked; the medic in me didn't like the idea of injecting anyone with something I knew nothing about, not even him.

"Don't worry, Doctor, this little potion won't hurt anyone."

"What about the other one?" I pursued. I wasn't taken in by his assurances.

"That won't hurt anyone either, I promise you. Now inject me."

I didn't have much choice, but I managed to keep back a little of the liquid to analyse later and slipped the hypo under the lip of Uhura's console. She was quick on the uptake, bless her. That is one smart lady. She'd covered it with some papers almost before I'd laid it down.

"And the other one?" I asked, drawing his attention away from my byplay.

"That's for Spock," he said.

"No!" I yelled emphatically. "He's been through enough already."

"Then I'll do it myself," he said. "I won't mind if I hurt him in the process," he added viciously.

I'd never learn what he injected into Spock if I let him do it, so I put out my hand mumbling, "I'd rather see it done properly."

Spock made no comment when I walked over to him. I could tell, though, that he thought he was about to die. He took a long look at Jim, and some silent understanding passed between them.

I had no choice, and his half-smile in my direction, so rarely used in my presence and normally reserved solely for Jim, made me appreciate that he did not blame me. But his lack of blame only served to make me feel worse.

I used the hypo, and kept back that little bit for analysis, hoping to discover an antidote. It was a long shot, but we'd taken advantage of those before. Spock realised what I was doing, because he attracted Mitchell's attention, enabling me to hide the second vial.

"What do you intend, Mr. Mitchell? I should like to know before I die, if it is permitted."

"You're a cool one, Mr. Spock. I could almost admire you if it wasn't for Gary. You're the one who recommended killing him. I can't forget that."

"Naturally," Spock said calmly. "It was necessary. I would make the same recommendation again if asked."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Mitchell. "You'll get your chance. But you might not come to that conclusion so easily this time."

"Indeed," was all he replied.

I waited for Spock to collapse, and was sure he was running his own analysis of his condition by the way he seemed to withdraw into

himself. Nothing happened, and he and I exchanged a rare look of complete understanding, both wondering why he was not dead. Mitchell took it upon himself to explain.

"Nothing will happen until we reach the Barrier. It took me a long time to have these perfected." He pointed to the vials that still remained in the box, and I breathed a sigh of relief when he did not think to check the empty ones. My relief was short-lived.

"The green liquid nullifies my Esper tendencies, while the yellow one is specially formulated to enhance and magnify any natural Esper tendencies a person possesses. I spent a lot of time and money having them perfected so they'd work on Humans and Vulcans alike. I wasn't sure Mr. Spock would still be here to oblige me, so I had to be sure I could choose another victim if necessary. Fortunately Mr. Spock was able to take part in my little experiment. The Barrier will do the rest. I'm sure you'll find it an interesting experiment."

"Fascinating," said Spock. I wasn't sure if he meant Mitchell's reaction or the experiment, and he didn't explain further. He turned back to his station and announced, "Ten minutes to the Barrier."

"No," said Mitchell suddenly. "I want you at navigation, Spock."

"Since you control the vessel that would be pointless," said Spock, as though speaking to a child.

"I don't care!" shouted Mitchell, enraged. "Get over there, now!"

Spock looked over at Jim for orders, and Mitchell lost his temper and slapped Spock sharply with the back of his hand. Spock just took it; he didn't even raise a hand to his face.

"I command here!" screamed Mitchell hysterically.

"No," said Spock firmly. "You threaten here, Mr. Mitchell, but you do not command."

Mitchell looked about to hit him again, but suddenly he smiled. "Have it your own way, Spock. You might as well enjoy your last few moments as a normal Human being."

"Vulcan," Spock corrected automatically.

"Yes, Vulcan," said Mitchell, his humour restored as Spock moved to the navigation console and sat down.

Jim looked distraught, and finally said in anguish, "I'm sorry, Spock. Whatever he did to you I had to let him, or he'd have killed the whole bridge crew."

"I understand," said Spock simply, and we all knew that he did. He accepted it in a way impossible for a Human, and yet he understood our Human reasoning too.

I didn't have much time to consider the exchange, and no time to analyse those vials, because the pink glow of the Barrier was suddenly upon us. The ship was bathed in an unnaturally bright light as we made contact.

"Just like last time," said Sulu into the uncanny silence.

He'd been through it before, but it was a first contact for me, and I didn't like it one little bit. None of us were safe there. "Let's get out of here!" I cried as the ship shuddered under the onslaught of the strange energy.

"Not yet." That was Mitchell.

Then it happened. A bolt of something like a cross between forked lightning and an electric current hit us. Spock, not surprisingly, took the brunt of the attack and fell from the navigator's chair in silence. Uhura too fainted. It did not surprise me that she had some natural Esper reactions. But my attention was taken by Jim.

He uttered a strangled, desperate cry. "No, Spock, not you too!"

He rushed to the fallen Vulcan and turned him over very gently. Spock's eyes finally opened and stared unblinkingly at Jim. They shone with the metallic gleam of purest silver.

I'd read about Gary Mitchell, the silver man, but it didn't prepare me for the sight of those hard, silver eyes. Spock had frequently been accused of being a cold fish, not least by me, but never had he looked so much like a calculating machine. Even his coldest stare had held something of the dignity and power of the man behind it. But that indomitable spirit was still there, together with that special link to Jim.

His voice was soft when he spoke, in terrible contrast to the harsh look of his face and the even harsher impact of his words. "You must kill me now, Jim, while you can."

"Spock... I... can't," whispered Jim, pain showing in every line of his face.

Mitchell grinned triumphantly. "I've won. I've had my revenge. You'll have to kill him now, just like you killed Gary. Or he'll kill us all. Oh, the sweetness of that knowledge!"

"No," said Jim. "He's not like Gary. Gary always thought he was better than other people. He always climbed over others without caring, so long as he made it to the top. The Barrier just emphasised his megalomania. Spock's not like that. He's considerate. He cares about life - all life. He'll never react like Gary did."

"You cannot know that, Captain," said Spock calmly, shattering Jim's dream. "You must kill me now, before it is too late. I do not know if I will be able to control such power any more than Gary could. My advice was good then, and it is good now. You owe it to the others. To this ship. I should prefer to die by the hand of a friend than to live in lonely isolation. Please, Jim."

I was sure that only Jim and I were close enough to hear those last few words, but I was wrong. Chris Mitchell had heard. He dropped down beside Jim and Spock.

"Would you really rather die, Mr. Spock?" he asked.

"Unquestionably."

There was total conviction in that one word. Jim and I exchanged looks over Spock's head.

Jim's eyes were desperate, but I could tell he'd made his mind up to do as Spock asked. Love halted him for a moment, and he stopped long enough to cradle Spock's head in his arms and whisper, "I am sorry, my friend."

Mitchell broke the moment. "No! It wasn't meant to be like this. Forgive me."

He jumped up and rushed to the navigation console, grabbing the other pair of hypos. Before anyone could react he had injected Spock with the green liquid and turned the yellow vial on himself. "Get us out of here, Mr. Sulu - I've released the controls!" he shouted.

"Helm answering," said Sulu, and at Kirk's nod he turned the Enterprise round to retrace our steps into our own galaxy.

We didn't make it before we were struck again by the strange force within the Barrier. Mitchell pushed Kirk away from Spock and threw himself on top of the Vulcan. Both were bathed in that electric light for an instant, and both their eyes gleamed silver, two pairs of hard, metallic orbs. Then the silver gleam faded from Spock's eyes and they returned to their customary deep brown.

Mitchell's eyes, however, seemed to gleam even more brightly, a cold, hard silver. In contrast his voice was very gentle as he looked down at Spock, who was still pinned beneath him.

"I'm sorry, Gary. I didn't realise you wanted it this way. I know what it's like to be alone, to be the odd one out, the different one, to have people pointing at you and calling you mad. I won't let you suffer like that, Gary. It's better to die with friends than to live alone. Forgive me, Gary. I almost made you suffer a fate worse than death. Please say you forgive me."

That Vulcan I'd frequently called unfeeling and worse rose to the occasion in a way I'd not have believed possible.

"Forgiveness is unnecessary between brothers, Christopher," he reassured Mitchell gently.

"You're the only one who's ever called me Christopher, you know, Gary. I've missed you all these years. But now we've found each other we'll never be alone again, will we?"

"Never," whispered Spock.

It was the last word that Mitchell heard as we were struck for a third time and he took the full force of the strange energy. He died with a smile on his face, fiercely holding on to Spock.

I prised them apart before it became impossible. Spock had been knocked out, and I feared he'd been turned to silver again, but when I lifted his eyelids I was reassured to see that his eyes remained brown, only they glistened with an unaccustomed moisture.

My own eyes wept in response, and it was through a haze that I answered Jim's question.

"Are they...?"

"Christopher is dead. Spock's been knocked out, but I think he'll be fine."

I looked over at Uhura. She was finally coming round, her head cradled in Sulu's lap. Her brown eyes were reassuring too, and they were wet with tears she had shed unashamedly. She had obviously heard what had gone on in the last few moments, and I saw Sulu rocking her gently.

We returned to our own space relatively unscathed. We still had power for warp drive, although some of the circuits had blown and secondary systems were being used.

Christopher had had his revenge at the expense of my two best friends, but in the end he had seen the pointlessness of revenge, and had experienced the joy of forgiveness.

I tried to broach the subject with Spock before the funeral, because I thought he might need to talk to someone and would never ask. I had him in sickbay for a checkup, which proved he was fine, although still not fully fit. I asked if he'd care to help me analyse the green and yellow liquids as an opener.

I think I was right in my diagnosis, but somehow I didn't time it quite right. He didn't talk. He turned on me like a charging bull elephant. That gentle, non-violent man took the vials out of my hand and crushed them between his fingers until the glass shattered under that demonstration of latent Vulcan strength. He ignored the green blood that ran down his hand, turned, and stormed out of sickbay. Then he stopped abruptly in the doorway and swung back at me.

"Do not pry into my personal life, Doctor. This subject is closed." With that he disappeared.

I stood there stunned by the force of his feelings and the fact that he had not minded me seeing them. I'd never seen him angry before - and I never want to again.

Jim recorded in the ship's log that Christopher Mitchell gave his life in the performance of his duty. I looked over at Spock, knowing how he liked everything to be accurate. He met my gaze blandly, almost challengingly, before exchanging a look of deep understanding with Jim.

Jim told me later that he remembered saying to Spock, "Will you try for one moment to feel, at least act like you've got a heart." The first time Spock had admitted that he did have one - although not the first time he acted like he had one - had been when Gary had died and he'd told Jim, "I felt for him too."

No-one needed to ask if Spock had felt for Christopher.

We buried Christopher next to Gary, Elizabeth Dehner and Lee Kelso at that deserted cracking station on Delta Vega. Jim and Spock insisted on beaming down alone, and I understood this was one experience I could never share with them, because I'd never known Gary.

A part of me remains on Delta Vega too, though, because I did know Christopher.



DOUBT

by

Krysia Baczala

Kirk had begun sleepwalking. So far it had happened at least five times, and now it was getting to be almost every night.

The worst thing was, he couldn't work out what was causing it. As far as he knew, before the first time (which had been about three weeks previously) he had never walked in his sleep in his life, not unless he had done so as a very young child. He certainly couldn't remember it ever having happened while he was an adult.

On the first occasion he had dismissed the evidence, simply because the probability had seemed so unlikely. He had come back 'home' to his cabin very late and physically tired after a workout in the Enterprise gym. Shedding his clothes, he had dropped into bed and slept long and hard. In the morning, waking by instinct when it was time to go on duty, he had showered and then found that his clothes had been neatly put away. His boots had been placed, inspection style, by the bed, and laundry was where it was supposed to be.

He had thought how unusual it was for his yeoman to enter his sleeping quarters while he was there, and that he must have slept so soundly that he hadn't heard her. Later, he had thanked her for tidying up. She said she hadn't done it.

He had let it go at the time, but thinking about it afterwards he supposed he'd allowed himself to believe that he had been so tired that night he'd done it himself without noticing.

The second time, some of the things on his shelves had been rearranged when he had woken, some antiques, a picture of Sam and his mother, and a horseshoe from the farm in Iowa had been moved. He had put them back where he liked to have them, but the next night they had been disturbed again.

Then he'd remembered the incident with his uniform. His next thought was that someone must have been coming in while he was asleep and rearranging things. He made a mental note to talk to Security.

That was when he had started locking his door so that only his personal code would open it. Before then, although courtesy dictated that people should seek permission to enter, it would have been possible for someone with mischief in mind not to ask permission but simply to go in uninvited.

For three nights he had security-coded his door, and nothing had happened. After the fourth night, he woke to find his bathroom was in a mess. Lotions and potions had been scattered, squeezed and splattered all over the walls and on the floor, the mirror, everywhere. He had found shaving foam on his hands, and toothpaste on his shirt.

He had sat down on the edge of the bed, quite worried and

puzzled. The coded lock on his door gave access to no-one except Spock, McCoy, and the Chief of Security. All three of them knew the emergency over-ride. He doubted seriously that any of them were the type to sneak in and play tricks. That would have been completely out of character.

He reasoned with himself that if no-one was coming in, then logically the only answer was that he had done it himself. But as he didn't remember doing it, he must have been doing it in his sleep.

The evidence was there, but he didn't want to believe it. No-one would. Why should he suddenly start to walk in his sleep at the age of thirty three?

He checked his own medical records, calling up anything the computer had on file regarding his childhood. He found measles and chicken-pox, and plenty of other details provided by his mother during the stringent checks carried out at the time of his entry into Starfleet. But there was nothing at all about sleepwalking.

He accessed the medical library from the personal terminal in his room, but found that sleepwalking was not a Human condition with which Starfleet was much concerned. The small amount of information he found suggested that such a problem might be caused by excessive tiredness or stress.

He thought about that for some time. No-one likes to believe that they are over-stressed. Kirk knew that he lived daily with excitement, responsibility, hard work - and sometimes danger. The crew of a Starship did lead a stressful life. But now, four years into a five-year mission, was there anything that could be causing particular anxiety? He didn't think so.

They were on a routine patrol, investigating and charting the stars and planets of a small section of space not much explored before. They had three observers with them, experts from Starfleet Academy, who were redesigning training schedules of cadets and restructuring the emphasis to reflect the ever-changing role of the 'space person'.

Spock also had an extra team of scientists on board who had asked permission, through very high channels, to set up experiments in space - something to do with energy from starlight. Kirk had hardly seen Spock since the scientists had come aboard, as the Science Officer had been closeted away working with the visitors.

Ten new crewmembers had come aboard at the last Starbase. They had been needed to replace two young ladies who were pregnant (very), three crew members who had retired, one who had been discharged for medical reasons, and there had been four additional crew to bring the Enterprise complement up to strength. They had been running a few hands short for some time.

So, all in all, there was nothing overtly unusual, no particularly stressful reason to find himself disturbed. Maybe, Kirk pondered, it was cumulative. Perhaps after four years of living by his wits things had finally taken their toll, and he would find that he couldn't cope any more. But he didn't really seriously think that this was the case. He felt all right.

On the other hand, he thought, maybe the trouble was that there was no stress at the moment. Maybe he had become a 'stressaholic',

and now that he had a few peaceful, routine days, his mind was rebelling.

Kirk decided that he would probably talk to McCoy. Sometime. Perhaps tomorrow, if things didn't get any better. Maybe.

The night after the bathroom incident Kirk tried an experiment. Before going to sleep he tied one end of a thick loop of thread to his wrist, and the other end to his bed. The theory was that he would awake if he attempted to move but found himself tethered.

In the morning he had a headache. The thread was still in place, but the computer was on and working. There were two new entries in his log, meaningless phrases that he couldn't remember dictating.

Poor experiment, he thought. If I can tie a thread while awake, I can surely tie another one in my sleep. This doesn't prove anything.

In his waste bin he found a broken thread.

Kirk went to see McCoy. The doctor was busy updating ship's medical records to include the new crew members. He could have had a junior nurse do it, but he liked to be familiar with who was on board, and if they had any special needs. He was pleased to be interrupted, as he had been working for some time.,

"Come in, Jim," he said. "Sit down. I could sure use an excuse to take a break."

Kirk took a seat opposite the doctor.

"Is this a social visit?" asked McCoy. "Or is it business?"

"Actually," Kirk admitted, "it's sort of personal."

McCoy immediately put aside the remainder of the bundle of computer dockets which he had in his hand and paid attention. It was rare for Kirk to seek a personal medical consultation.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, leaning slightly forward.

Kirk didn't really know where to begin. "I'm having trouble sleeping," he told the doctor.

"How do you mean?" queried McCoy. "Can't drop off? Wake up too early? Bad dreams? What?"

"Not exactly." Kirk hesitated. "More like..."

McCoy waited.

"... restless nights," Kirk finished. "Bones, will you check me out, please? Full physical."

Something's got him worried, thought McCoy.

He spent an hour calmly checking out his friend. During all the tests and questions about diet, aches and pains etc., one thing

McCoy became aware of: there was something Kirk wasn't telling him. He knew Kirk so well that he sensed there was something hovering in the background.

Finally, after 'playing doctor' for an hour or so, he sat Kirk down in front of him and in his best friendly country doctor manner asked, "Jim, I know I'm not getting the full story. What is it? I can't help you if you don't tell me."

So Kirk told him. He played it down, not going into all the details, but he said enough for McCoy to see that he was anxious.

McCoy sat back and considered for a while. "Jim, it's probably nothing," he said finally. "Sometimes people go through this for a few days and then it never happens again."

But Kirk wanted to know what caused it.

"Who knows?" McCoy shrugged. "It could be anything. Preoccupation, a change of diet, anything. Do you feel well?"

"Yes," Kirk assured him. "Apart from the occasional headache when I wake up."

"That could be due just to very deep sleep, but I'll do a couple of extra brain scans if it will put your mind at rest. But honestly, Jim, I wouldn't worry; it'll probably stop soon."

With that McCoy carried out several scans of different types. Everything appeared normal. He instructed Kirk to keep a careful record of everything he ate and drank, and offered him medication in the form of sleep enhancers, but Kirk declined. Feeling as if he hadn't really achieved anything, except perhaps to reassure his Captain, McCoy sent Kirk on his way and then turned to his vast medical library and began to research sleepwalking.

Kirk did indeed feel a little reassured. The simple fact that he had told McCoy eased the worry slightly. He wished he could talk to Spock, but the Vulcan was so busy with all his extra duties that Kirk would have felt slightly guilty about disturbing him over something so unusual and possibly trivial. He decided not to bother Spock, but he still felt somehow disquieted.

He was beginning to worry about going to sleep, and he began to stay up later and later and rise earlier, so that he would be as tired as possible. He didn't want to admit to himself that he was probably a little scared of going to sleep in case it happened again. He didn't like unexplained mysteries.

For two nights following his visit to sickbay nothing unusual happened. Then, three night ago, another meaningless log entry had been made, but this time from Briefing Room One. This was the first evidence Kirk had found that he had been going out of his room during one of the 'episodes'. He began to worry seriously. What if he inadvertently did something dangerous in his sleep, like open one of the airlocks, or override a computer imperative?

Last night he felt as though he had slept well, but this morning he had had a dreadful headache, and he felt very thirsty, rather like a 'morning after the night before', except that there hadn't been a 'night before'. He decided he would definitely go and

see McCoy again later that evening; he didn't get the opportunity, however, because events seemed to conspire against him.

It turned out to be one of the busiest days on the Enterprise for some time. In addition to all his normal duties, the Starfleet training team requested interviews with him, and he gave them several hours of his time.

Later, one of Spock's team of scientists sent a message that their experiments were nearing fruition sooner than expected, and they would like to hold an exhibition and display of their achievements. They suggested that anyone who was interested should come to the labs in the early evening, and Kirk, being the Captain, was expected to attend as a diplomatic gesture.

Kirk was actually quite interested in the work and welcomed an opportunity to examine it. Energy from starlight, which the scientists were pursuing, could only enhance the quality and feasible distance of spaceflight. He would also be glad to see Spock again, and maybe talk to him. Over these three weeks they had only met very briefly, in passing. He put on his dress uniform and went to the 'open evening'.

For twenty days Spock had suspected that he had been feeling excited. Vulcans do not get excited, he knew, so he presumed that it was his Human half that put an extra spring in his step and kept him in the lab for all hours.

He was thankful that Kirk had agreed to allow other officers in the Science Section to take on his duties on the bridge so that he could concentrate on assisting the experts who had come aboard to extend their investigations. Their work was challenging and worthwhile. Spock had been in his element. However, the work was also quite tiring, so he too was glad to display the results to the rest of the people on the Starship, and at the same time partake of a little relaxation, discussion and refreshment.

The minute Kirk arrived Spock knew something was wrong. The Captain didn't look well. Spock couldn't have defined his feeling. It might have been something as simple as the way Kirk held his head, or some other subliminal signal which neither of them would have been able to describe or even admit to, yet he put down his drink and was across the room by Kirk's side in an instant.

"Good evening, Captain," he began. "Are you well?"

Kirk gave a nod and looked at his Science Officer in a slightly distracted way, almost as though he was surprised to see him. "I'm okay, really."

Spock's uneasiness grew.

"I've been meaning to look in on you. I'm delighted your work has been so successful."

"Captain..."

But Spock was interrupted by Benyon, one of the chief scientists, who took Kirk by the arm and led him away, telling him how pleased he was that the Captain could attend, and showing him various pieces of apparatus.

Spock was given no chance to continue with what he really wanted to say. If he had followed, it would have appeared rude; so, ever the diplomat, he let it go, but he and the Captain exchanged a glance that promised they would seek each other out later.

But the evening continued in much the same way. Both men were kept apart and so busy that finally Kirk, who was feeling very tired after several short nights, an early start and an exhausting day, withdrew. Before making his way thankfully to his cabin he gestured a farewell to Spock across the room. He had noticed that the Vulcan had been watching him from a distance, and felt some reassurance in that. He knew that as soon as the Science Officer had finished his duties he would seek him out in his cabin.

Spock, who would have been frustrated - had he been totally Human - by his inability to get close to his Captain and discuss what was obviously worrying him, stalwartly continued to explain machines and define ideas to visiting interested parties.

Alone in his cabin, Kirk paced the floor for some time. He poured himself a drink, then sat and stared at the wall for a while. He felt slightly embarrassed at the thought of explaining his sleepwalking to Spock, but was relieved that there was someone who would listen, without derision, when he talked. He knew that for many reasons, command being just one of them, he should share and explain this problem.

When Spock had not appeared by quite late an hour, Kirk assumed that he must have been delayed by the 'occasion'. He stretched himself out on the bed to rest while he waited. Tired, and perhaps comforted by the knowledge that Spock was on his way, he fell asleep.

Kirk was wakened by the persistent bleeping of his intercom. His cabin was dark, and he felt slightly groggy. He had obviously been in a very deep sleep, and it took him a moment to orientate himself and remember who and where he was.

As he reached over to press the button which would answer the intercom, a sharp pain shot up his left arm from the bone that was above the knuckle of his middle finger. He grimaced, and couldn't understand why; maybe he had slept on it too long. He reached out his right hand instead, and found that he could hardly move it. All the muscles were sore, his fingers throbbed, and his whole hand felt hot and swollen.

Oh god, what now? he thought, and using his left hand, the one that hurt less, he sat up on the edge of the bed and pressed the button on the wall.

"What?" he said.

"Captain, this is Jackson from Security," announced a voice that sounded tinny in the darkness. "Mr. Spock has been attacked in the science lab. We've taken him to sickbay, and Dr. McCoy felt you should be informed immediately."

"Of course," said Kirk, as a knot of fear formed in his stomach. "I'll be down right away. Is he all right?"

"He's still unconscious, sir. The doctor is examining him now."

Kirk switched off the intercom. "Lights," he said to the computer, and looked down at his hands. Among the swollen knuckles and the purple bruises and the scraped skin he could clearly see traces of green blood. He looked down at his clothes; the front of his shirt had dark stains on it. He closed his eyes for a moment and drew a deep breath. He could feel the adrenalin pumping through his system.

Training, or maybe the part of his personality that kept him going even under severe stress, took over. He didn't, wouldn't, daren't, allow himself to think.

He rapidly rinsed his face and his hands in cold water, and with some difficulty changed into a clean shirt. In record time he was at the entrance to sickbay.

As the doors opened to receive him he clasped his hands firmly behind his back and strode in. McCoy was in a small room to one side, where Spock could be seen laid out on one of the diagnostic beds.

Kirk kept walking and said, "Doctor McCoy, your office. Now, please."

McCoy turned. "Jim, you can see I'm..."

But Kirk had vanished into the office and closed the door.

McCoy was frankly astonished. It was common knowledge that whenever Spock was injured Kirk could hardly be prised away from his side, and yet here he was not just ignoring the Vulcan but calling McCoy himself away too. There was obviously something going on here that he didn't understand.

McCoy almost threw down his instruments, and leaving Nurse Chapel to carry out the last few stages of his almost completed ministrations, he followed Kirk into the sickbay office.

Kirk was standing on the other side of the room, facing the door.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" McCoy began.

"How is he?" Kirk demanded, interrupting. "What happened?"

McCoy was relieved to see the obvious concern. For a moment he had thought... Well, he knew he wouldn't get anything further out of Kirk until he had given the information.

"He's going to be all right. Someone apparently attacked him in the lab while he was switching off the equipment after everyone had gone. He's been systematically and quite badly beaten. There's no permanent damage, although I'm worried about one of his eyes. He's got two cracked ribs and two loose teeth, and a hell of a lot of cuts and bruises. As far as I can tell it was quite a vicious attack." He stopped suddenly at the look on Kirk's face. "What is it, Jim?"

"Has he said who did it?" asked Kirk.

"No, he hasn't regained consciousness since the security patrol found him. Jim, what I can't understand is how he could have allowed himself to be beaten like that without defending himself. Even if he was surprised, or if there were several attackers, then with that Vulcan strength of his he should have been able to defend himself until he could call Security, or some other help."

"There's one other possibility you haven't considered," Kirk told him, looking at the floor. "What if he wasn't surprised because it was someone he knew and trusted? Someone he didn't think he had to defend himself against."

"What are you saying?" demanded McCoy.

Kirk summoned up his courage. "Bones," he said, releasing his grip from behind his back and thrusting his hands out towards McCoy, "look at my hands!"

McCoy stood frozen for a moment. Then he stepped forward. Taking hold of Kirk's wrists he turned both hands this way and that, examining either side. He noted the obviously painful condition of the joints, muscles and skin. He took in the slightly dishevelled appearance of the Captain, and the controlled panic. He searched Kirk's face, but saw only that Kirk kept his gaze lowered, as though he couldn't bear to meet the doctor's eyes.

Grim faced, McCoy asked, "How did it happen?"

"I don't know," Kirk lamented. "I was asleep!" and he snatched his hands away and put them behind him again. Then he looked up to meet McCoy's gaze.

"Was it me?" he almost pleaded. "Did I do it? Have I been sleepwalking again? If it was me, you must lock me up. You must hide me away. We don't know what I might do next. Who I might harm."

Kirk was appealing for some sort of reassurance. McCoy could see his obvious distress, but he was somewhat taken aback. He didn't really know what to say. He had rarely seen the Captain so distraught. His soul wanted to comfort the man, but his professionalism made him examine the facts. All the evidence pointed to a distasteful scenario.

When in doubt, stall! he thought, and aloud he said, "Come on, Jim, sit down - let me take a look at those injuries." And he pushed Kirk down into a chair.

Fetching an x-ray viewer, he determined that there was only one broken bone, the central metacarpel on the left hand. He administered a local anaesthetic and then sprayed both hands with a skin regenerator and antiseptic before applying a small cast. Finally he gave Kirk a shot which was a mild sedative.

Kirk had been silent throughout. McCoy, meanwhile, babbled away in an attempt to ease the silence, with small talk such as "Hold this," or "Turn it over," or "Let me see the other one."

At the hiss of the hypo, Kirk looked up. "What was that?"

"A sedative." Then he sat down opposite Kirk. "Jim, I want you to stay in sickbay for the next few nights so that I can keep an eye on you. By rights, if the evidence proves that you really did

attack Spock, then I shall have no option other than to relieve you of command."

Kirk stiffened. McCoy continued before the Captain could say anything.

"I don't want to do it. I don't believe I shall ever have to. Jim, it's well documented that sleepwalkers don't normally do things that are out of character for them. There's something else going on here that we don't understand, I'm sure of it. Until Spock's on his feet again, we'd better not have a ship without either a First Officer or a Captain on duty. In the meantime, we'll get Security to carry out a full investigation. Unless they say otherwise, you can carry on your duties during the day and come in and sleep here at night so that we can see what happens."

It said a great deal for Kirk's state of mind that he allowed McCoy to make suggestions and even decisions without challenging them, or taking the lead in the situation himself. But the suggestions were good ones, and he saw no reason to object to them. He appreciated McCoy's loyalty.

After sitting still for a few moments he told McCoy that he agreed with him, then asked, "Can we go and see Spock now?"

And they did.

McCoy dismissed all the medical staff so that only the three of them remained in the small sickbay annexe where Spock lay. Kirk approached the bed.

"Can you bring him round?" he asked.

McCoy considered. "I'd rather not. He'll be in some pain."

Kirk moved to the head of the bed and looked down at the Vulcan for the first time since the attack. He was astonished at the extent of the bruising. One eye was almost completely closed, and Spock's face was badly swollen. Kirk looked down at his own neatly bandaged hands.

"I have to know, Bones," he almost whispered.

McCoy took pity on his Captain, and reaching for a hypo he injected Spock with a stimulant.

The Vulcan awoke almost immediately. He appeared dazed, and tried to open his eyes. When he only partially succeeded he tried to speak, but obviously found that his lips and jaw weren't functioning properly. His next action was to raise his hands and explore his face. His breathing became rather rapid.

"He's in shock, Jim," said McCoy; then to the Vulcan, "Spock, can you hear me? You're all right." Then he took Spock's hands away from his face. "You're in sickbay. You've been injured, but you're going to be all right."

Spock's breathing gradually slowed as he composed himself. Eventually his eyes came to rest on Kirk.

"Captain," he said, attempting to rise, "I am sorry I was unable to come to your cabin. I was concerned that you did not appear well when I saw you earlier."

McCoy and Kirk looked at each other. That did not sound like the greeting a victim would use when facing his attacker for the first time after an assault.

Kirk reached out and prevented Spock from rising. "Keep still," he said. "It's not me you should be worrying about. You've got some cracked ribs, and a few other things to worry about of your own."

"Indeed," Spock agreed. "I was just beginning to repair them."

Kirk almost laughed aloud, but realised he would probably sound hysterical, or close to it. "Spock, what happened?" he demanded.

Spock closed his good eye for a moment, then he looked at Kirk again. "I do not remember all the details clearly, Captain. I was shutting down the equipment in the laboratory when I recall that I sensed a presence behind me. I had no time to turn, and I believe I was struck from behind." He raised a hand and felt at a portion of the back of his head.

Once again, McCoy pulled his hand away. "Leave it alone," he instructed. "I've already patched that once. We thought you had fallen and struck your head."

"No, Doctor, I was definitely knocked out." Then, after a pause, "How did I come by my other injuries?"

"Good question," said McCoy. "Someone beat you, I'm afraid. Someone even more disturbed than we thought, if he did it after you were unconscious." He suddenly stopped, realising what he had said, and privately told himself to bite his tongue or kick himself. He had almost felt Kirk wince. Then he asked Spock,

"Do you know who it was?"

"I do not," replied Spock.

"But why would they do that after he was unconscious?" queried Kirk. "We'd rather assumed they had attacked you, and continued until you lost consciousness."

"I don't know," McCoy admitted. "Unless it was to make another man think he had done it."

Spock took in the suggestion left hanging in the air, and the bandaged state of Kirk's hands, and put two and two together. Before either man could stop him he sat up and swung his legs over the edge of the bed.

"Captain, I do not believe the presence I sensed behind me was you. I do not know who it was, but if it had been you I would have known it."

This was the first hopeful sign Kirk had had for some time, and it was encouraging, but it wasn't evidence. Nevertheless, he thanked Spock for the simple reassurance.

The Vulcan wanted to know why they would even consider that it had been Kirk who had carried out the attack, and insisted that they tell him everything that had occurred.

Despite McCoy's protests that he should rest, they knew that

the fastest way to get him to lie down again was to comply, so they told him the whole story from the very beginning. They explained all the puzzles, and the evidence that was accumulating for a pattern of steadily destructive sleepwalking.

"Fascinating," said Spock, true to character, when they had finally finished. He agreed that it would be wise for Kirk to stay in sickbay at night, and that Security should begin an investigation. Then he paused for a moment and announced, "I shall sleep on it."

With that he lay down and was indeed almost instantly asleep. Even after all this time, thought Kirk, sometimes it was difficult to get used to Spock.

The doctor made sure the Vulcan was comfortable, and he and Kirk went back to his office to talk again.

McCoy became aware that Kirk was only a little more relaxed. Talking to him further, he saw that Kirk was still preoccupied with the thought that he walked in his sleep, and that he did things in that state which seemed more disturbed and awful each time. Kirk even made McCoy promise that when he came into sickbay to sleep as arranged, someone would be with him at all times.

McCoy was anxious to reassure his Captain, and so promised to organise a watch, which seemed to be the only way he could get Kirk to agree to try to sleep at all. Kirk finally succumbed to the sedative McCoy had given him, and went to sleep in a private room.

The next day Spock was so much better that he was up and around. McCoy insisted that he only took on light duties, and Spock complied. It suited him very well at the moment to have only partial duties to perform; that would allow him to spend the rest of his time investigating this intriguing situation.

Kirk tried hard to continue with his daily routine. He was determined not to let the fact that he was busy working as normal all day, yet returning to sleep in sickbay at night, upset him.

Despite thorough investigations, Security turned up nothing further on the attack on Spock. The Vulcan himself gradually looked much better, although Kirk hardly saw him because the security enquiries and his scientific work kept him fairly occupied.

With a nightwatch of staff in sickbay Kirk felt a little better. None of the staff had reported seeing him show any signs of sleepwalking, or movements other than those of normal sleep.

Once again Kirk awoke to complete darkness. He knew he was still in sickbay by the faint smell of the antiseptics and the other medications which always permeated the air of any hospital, no matter how modern. He could feel the diagnostic bed below him, not quite as comfortable as his own bed, but adequate. He lay very still, hands clasping the edges of the bed.

Something was terribly wrong. He could feel it in the air. It was never totally dark in sickbay. There were always the night lights of the nursing staff, and the glow of the monitors.

He was tempted by a great desire to just lie there quietly and be overcome by the silence and the stillness. A part of him didn't want to face any new trauma.

Where was McCoy? The doctor had promised that he would sit with him until he fell asleep. In fact, the last thing he remembered before dropping off was McCoy sitting in a chair in the corner idly flicking the pages of a medical journal. He had occasionally glanced up at Kirk, to reassure him perhaps that someone was keeping watch. Surely the doctor wouldn't have left him?

The darkness really began to bother him. He sat up, and suddenly felt very dizzy and had to grip the sides of the bed very firmly to prevent himself falling off. His breathing came in short gasps, almost hyperventilating. Even while his brain fought to regain its balance another part of it was wondering why he should feel dizzy. Stress? Anxiety? Too deep sleep? Surely not!

Like a drunken man he rolled off the couch and lurched the few steps across the room to where memory told him the door would be. He fumbled for the light switch, and after a moment found it. The room was instantly illuminated.

Several things struck him immediately. Firstly, he was absolutely covered in blood. Bright red, shiny blood, not yet dry. Slick blood and sticky blood, on his shirt and on his trousers and splashed onto his boots, splattered onto his face and soaking into the bandages on his hands. So much blood. Fresh blood. He could smell it. Nausea rose within him, and he shivered with revulsion. Whose blood? It wasn't his - he felt no pain, and he didn't sense any injury.

The next thing his reeling senses absorbed was the sight of McCoy's body lying face down in the corner by the chair where he had been sitting reading. The magazine lay crumpled on the floor at his side.

Halfway between Kirk and McCoy lay a vicious-looking, bloodstained dagger.

Kirk actually cried out in a shout of rage, disbelief, anger and despair, a sound so deeply from the heart that it would have torn at the soul of anyone unfortunate enough to hear it.

Is this what madness is like? he thought. He leaned his head back against the wall, gritting his teeth, tears stinging at his eyes. He didn't know whether to scream, or to pound at the wall with his fists, or to collapse in despair. Panic welled up inside him. Not Bones, he thought. Please no, not Bones.

He turned to face the wall, his back to his friend, and stood for a moment. Then he pressed the intercom.

"Bridge," he said with an effort that it took all his emotional control to muster.

"Bridge, aye," said a voice.

Kirk could hardly bring himself to reply.

"Bridge, aye," repeated the voice impatiently.

Kirk cleared his throat and swallowed. "This is Captain Kirk," he said in a voice not quite tinged with panic. "I need Mr. Spock and a top grade security team in sickbay right away."

"Sir, Mr. Spock is detained with the..."

"NOW!" and Kirk snapped off the intercom.

He forced himself to turn round slowly and look at his friend. Oh, Bones, his mind mourned, what have I done? How did we let it come to this? and he finally summoned up the courage to cross over to the doctor's limp form. He knelt, and grasping McCoy's shoulder gently turned him over.

With a peculiar jolt of clarity and reality it suddenly came to him that there was no blood on McCoy. Blood on the knife, blood on the floor, blood on the bed, blood on himself - but no blood on McCoy. And he couldn't see any sign of injury.

Adrenalin surged. Hesitantly, hardly daring to hope, he reached out a hand to feel for McCoy's pulse. Picking up a limp wrist - a warm wrist, a supple wrist, a live wrist! - he found the pulse he was looking for. The world lurched again. How many times can an emotional Human leap from despair to euphoria in a few short hours without those emotions taking their toll on the very fibre of the person?

He didn't understand what was happening. If McCoy was alive, then where had all the blood come from, and what was wrong with McCoy? Kirk reached out to feel for the stronger pulse at the neck, to reassure himself.

"Captain," said Spock's voice from the doorway, "please move away from the doctor."

Kirk looked up. Spock stood in the entrance flanked by two heavily armed security guards.

To Kirk's troubled mind Spock appeared solid as a rock, tall and straight and an oasis of calm in the centre of his own frenzied and disintegrating universe. It came to him that Spock thought he intended McCoy some harm. He almost laughed aloud. He probably did. He didn't know. He moved away.

"I'll not harm him, Spock, if that's what you're worried about. He's alive, d'you see? I didn't kill him." And the relief in his voice was terrible to hear. He sat back on his heels and smiled weakly up at Spock.

The Vulcan stood for a moment surveying his Captain. Then turning slightly he gave a string of orders. He sent one security man scuttling off to get medical help for McCoy.

Dr. M'Benga was there in seconds. He and a guard lifted the doctor onto the couch, first covering it to mask the spilled blood. Scanning, M'Benga assured Spock and the Captain that McCoy was only unconscious, probably from a blow on the head, and that he would recover shortly.

Some very curious glances had been directed at Kirk, who was still sitting on his heels in the corner, covered with blood. But he was so tired, so short of breath, so happy to know that McCoy was alive, that he could hardly move and didn't care.

Spock fiddled with several monitors on the wall, then addressed the assembled company. "You will not speak of this to anyone," he said firmly. "I shall return later and explain. Captain..." and he crossed to Kirk, "we must talk in your quarters."

Kirk had been having some difficulty just keeping a grip on reality. With Spock's help he struggled to his feet and followed him out and along the corridor. Spock signalled to a security guard, who followed them discreetly.

Kirk stopped halfway down the corridor. "Will he be all right?" he asked, gesturing over his shoulder.

"I believe so, Captain. It was only a minor blow."

They walked on. When they reached the Captain's cabin they entered, while the security guard remained outside. Kirk was aware that he was not being his usual alert self, and that he was being terribly slow getting anything done.

"Spock!" he exclaimed. "If that blood wasn't McCoy's, then where did it come from?"

There was rather a long silence before Spock finally spoke. "I believe you should sit down, Captain."

Kirk looked at him. He didn't sit. "What is it?"

"Captain, the chief scientist in our group, Benyon, was murdered earlier this evening. He was viciously attacked with a knife and subjected to multiple stab wounds. There are no witnesses to the event. I was attending the scene with a security team when your call came through."

Spock stopped. He saw the Captain's face drop. Here was a man who, having just been given a mental reprieve from the awful fear that he had killed his friend, was now being plunged back into doubt and insecurity.

"You think I did it, don't you?" Kirk stooped a step away. "You think I knocked out McCoy and then went and stabbed Benyon. But I was asleep!" The last word was almost a cry, a plea.

"I know you were," Spock said calmly.

Kirk just stared at him, stunned. Then all of a sudden he felt completely weak and dizzy, and tired and drained. He buried his face in his hands.

The Vulcan had little experience in dealing with emotionally distraught Humans, and he never would have admitted that he operated by instinct, but he stepped up to Kirk, took him by the shoulders, lowered him into a chair and then shook him very gently.

"Jim," he said firmly, "stop it."

It was such a surprising thing for Spock to do that Kirk looked up and straight at him. Spock removed his hands and placed them behind his back in characteristic fashion.

"Captain," he said, "I have evidence that you were not responsible. I am aware that you are probably suffering from shock. I think you should wash. I think that you should eat and

drink, as you are probably drugged and therefore dehydrated."

Kirk stared at him.

Spock continued, "I think you should become calm and then listen to some information that I have gathered which I wish to share with you."

Kirk made an attempt to protest, but Spock cut him off.

"No, sir," and the use of the title made the request respectfully formal, "I will not talk to you while you are in this condition." He indicated the gradually congealing bloodstains on Kirk's clothing, and his trembling hands.

Kirk gave in. He knew Spock was right. He felt dreadful, and knew he needed help. He headed for the shower; in this mood Spock would give nothing away until he was satisfied that Kirk was sufficiently recovered to assimilate new information.

Kirk stopped at the doorway to his sleeping area and turned. "You won't go away, will you?"

Spock raised an eyebrow. They looked at each other. Spock seemed to be silently asking whether Kirk honestly believed that his friend would go away and leave him like this.

"Right," said Kirk, and stepped through the doorway.

Kirk showered three times. The space age showers, on the correct setting, would have sterilised a bubonic plague if required, but the psychological impact of all that blood was hard to erase. Twice he felt very dizzy, and had to lean on the wall for support until the sensation passed.

When he emerged he found that Spock had laid out a new uniform for him, and there was a nutritious meal and an enormous pitcher of fresh water ready on the table. Spock re-banded Kirk's hands, and indicated that Kirk should eat; he also made him drink several glasses of water.

Kirk was still trembly round the edges, but he was definitely beginning to feel a little better. Spock, finally satisfied that he had done all he could for his Captain's physical comfort, indicated that he was ready to talk.

Just as they settled themselves down McCoy arrived from sickbay. Kirk found himself rushing to greet him.

"Bones, are you all right?"

"Don't fuss," complained McCoy. "It was only a little bump on the head. What's going on?"

Spock rose. "Doctor, your arrival is opportune. We were about to discuss the situation. Will you join us?" Then, as an afterthought, and as a diplomatic gesture to the Human need for verbally expressing concern, "I am delighted to see you are recovered."

McCoy beamed. "Why, Spock," he said, grinning, "I didn't know

you cared." and he lowered himself gingerly into a seat. "Jim, come and sit next to me. I want to take a look at you."

Kirk seated himself next to McCoy and Spock sat in the chair across the low table from them. McCoy gave Kirk a quick once-over.

"Hmm." He glanced at Spock. "You've done a good job. He looks better already." Then to Kirk, "How do you feel, Jim?"

Kirk sighed. "Peculiar. Too much has happened recently that I don't understand. I don't like not being in control. We've all had more than our fair share of bruises and headaches from this. It's time we found out what's going on. Spock, let's get down to business. What can you tell us that will shed some light on all of this?"

Spock and McCoy exchanged glances. This was more like the Captain they were used to. They could tell that he was making a distinct effort to control his overtaxed emotions.

Spock sat up straight, yet leaned slightly towards the two men, intent on his explanation.

"I have been examining the evidence," he began. "First of all, it seems there are three possible explanations for what is happening. One is that the Captain is doing all of this intentionally. The second is that the Captain is under the influence of some exterior force and is responsible for all that has occurred, but involuntarily. The third possibility is that someone, or a group of people, is engineering the situation to make it appear as though the Captain is responsible. Let us take them one at a time." He shifted back slightly in his chair.

"It is not likely that the Captain is doing this intentionally. We know him well, and based on his past record and psychological profile, it would be out of character for him to do so. There is no evidence that he has gone insane..."

"Oh, thanks," muttered Kirk wryly, but Spock continued as though he hadn't heard.

"The doctor's tests on the Captain show normal brain patterns, and when awake his behaviour is rational, although somewhat affected by recent events. I therefore dismiss that possibility."

"Nice to know the boss hasn't lost his marbles," grinned McCoy. Kirk elbowed him playfully in the ribs.

Spock continued, "The possibility that the Captain has been under the direct control of an external force has troubled me. It would be most unsafe if a Starship Captain could come under such an influence with no detectable outward sign other than sleepwalking, which could so easily be dismissed as a natural occurrence. I was particularly alarmed when I discovered that you were being drugged." For the first time he addressed himself directly to Kirk.

McCoy butted in. "Drugged, you say? I didn't pick up anything on my tests."

"You would not have," Spock explained. "The drug is not one that I have come across before." He turned to Kirk. "Captain, on one of the nights you spent in sickbay, I took a blood sample from you. You were in such a deep sleep that you did not feel it. That

in itself gave me a clue as to what to look for. It is a drug that, as far as I have been able to make out, causes very deep, almost coma-like sleep for a short period of time. It would act almost like an anaesthetic. You could have been physically harmed during that time and you would not even have felt it."

Kirk looked down at his bandaged hands. "You mean someone could have pounded at my hands with a hammer or something, and I wouldn't even have felt that?"

"Indeed," said Spock.

There was an uncomfortable silence while they tried to imagine the sort of demented mind that could do such a thing. Spock eventually continued.

"The drug dissipates within the body almost completely in a very short time. That is why it did not show up on the doctor's scans. When you visited the doctor it was around noon, ship's time. If it had been administered to take effect during the night, all traces would have been gone by then. I would speculate that as a side effect the drug would cause headaches on awakening and probably dizziness after prolonged use. It could also cause dehydration, and may even attack the blood sugars, thus compounding the dizziness and causing shortness of breath. I do not believe it has been administered regularly, but at intervals, probably just before each incident."

"But how?" demanded Kirk.

"Captain, if you will permit it, I shall return to that later."

Kirk nodded. Spock drew a deep breath and continued.

"The alarm I felt when I discovered that you were being drugged, and therefore were possibly under an external influence, has dissipated somewhat. Apart from the fact that someone has been 'getting at you' with the drug, which still causes grave concern, I do not believe that the drug was used to control you in any way other than to cause you to sleep very deeply, so I discount the possibility that you are being controlled by a drug. As to any other method of control, I have discounted that too. You see, I have had cause to touch you."

Kirk looked puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"When I had analysed the blood sample I took, I returned to sickbay and simply touched your hand for a few moments. As you know, that amount of contact is enough for me to assess the state of the mind. I could sense that you were not hypnotised, and you were not brainwashed. Your mind was your own."

"So that was what you were doing!" exclaimed McCoy. "I saw him in there, Jim, standing over you in the dark, and when I came in he jumped like a scalded cat and made a fast exit." Then to Spock, "I thought you were just embarrassed at being caught showing concern."

Spock looked down. "I was embarrassed, Doctor, but not for that reason. It is not permitted to touch another's mind without permission. I felt that I had committed an unpardonable indiscretion."

"It's all right," said Kirk. "You had a very good reason, and

you know that if I had been awake at the time I would have allowed it as a valuable way to eliminate the possibility of mind control. If it ever happens again, consider permission granted as of now."

Spock nodded an acknowledgement. Or was it a thank you?

Kirk was wanting to get to the point. "So if we've eliminated the first two possibilities, that leaves the last one, that someone other than me is responsible."

Spock nodded. "I believe so, Captain."

Kirk leaned back in his chair. "Gentlemen," he announced, "I have never been so happy to hear anything in my life."

McCoy could almost see a weight lifting off the Captain's shoulders. It was as if his mind could be seen to relax, and as if a new energy flowed through him. Now the enemy was real and external. Unknown yet, but tangible, something he could fight, something he could match wits against, instead of the internal spectre of fear and doubt. There was a change in the air that could almost be felt.

"Any theories, Mr. Spock?" Kirk asked, looking expectantly at the Vulcan.

Spock hesitated. "We have very few facts."

"Indulge me. Speculate."

"Very well, Captain. As I see it, if there is indeed someone responsible for all these incidents, we must consider what they hoped to achieve by these actions and how they carried them out. In this way we may be able to establish who is responsible. I shall share my thoughts with you.

"First, I believe we should consider motives. They can be listed. The person concerned may have wished to achieve any of several things. Firstly, this may have been the displacement of Captain Kirk as commanding officer, or the physical harm of the Captain, or the causing of his nervous collapse, perhaps even his eventual death. It is possible that someone has a personal vendetta against the Captain.

"Secondly, my own injuries may have had a hidden purpose, possibly delaying the scientific experiments and offsetting the blame onto the Captain, in the hope that this attack would be seen as part of the pattern, and no other culprit would be sought.

"Thirdly, perhaps both of the first two could have been part of one goal. It is possible that someone seeks to incapacitate both senior officers, either to take over the Enterprise or out of a desire for vengeance for some past act in which we were both involved. Maybe there is some other reason that the two of us are wanted out of the way.

"But this does not concern just the two of us. There is Benyon. Benyon was killed. That may mean someone wished all three of us harm. It may alternatively mean that they wished harm to the experiments, to prevent Benyon and me from effectively working on them, designing events to throw suspicion on the Captain.

"It is also possible that Benyon alone was the intended victim,

and that all the other incidents were designed to culminate in this one final act - or perhaps some other incident which has not yet occurred.

"Lastly, it is even possible to speculate that this is the work of some madman, a maniac who takes pleasure in causing physical injury or anguish."

Spock stopped. There was silence for some time. Finally Kirk let out a breath, almost as though he had been holding it since Spock began.

"Put like that," he said, "it could be almost anyone, for any number of reasons. It's too much. There are too many possibilities. It's a real mess. How do we begin to sort it out and narrow it down?"

"I suggest, Captain, that it might help us to find the 'who' if we examine the 'how'."

"Right," agreed Kirk. "Let's go through it all. Spock, you said you'd get back to how I was drugged."

"Yes, perhaps I can explain. The drug is activated by the natural body drugs produced during the early stages of sleep. Until then it lies dormant. It could have been administered at any time of the day, in food, in drink, or by skin contact, and there would have been no effect - until, that is, you went to sleep. Then the drug would have been activated and would have sent you into an extremely deep sleep. When you did awake, it would rapidly break down and would not be detectable in a laboratory. I found traces only because I withdrew blood actually during deep sleep. Incidentally, Captain, may I assure you that I do not believe you ever actually walked in your sleep."

Kirk looked at him keenly. "Can you prove that?"

"I cannot, of course, account for each incident, but I can prove that while Benyon was being killed you were in deep sleep in sickbay."

"How?" demanded Kirk.

"The monitors were not just monitoring, they were set to record. When I discovered you with the doctor earlier, I checked them. There was no break in the record. You were on that bed the whole time. Once you accept that during this incident you were incapacitated, it is probable that the same is true of all the others."

"So what you're saying," Kirk theorised aloud, "is that someone drugged me during the day, waited until I feel asleep, then murdered Benyon, came to sickbay, knocked out Bones, splashed blood all over me, dropped the knife, and made their escape."

Spock nodded.

"My prints on the knife?"

"No."

"Was that Benyon's blood on me?"

"No. Too much of it too soon after the stabbing. I checked while you were in the shower. Someone has recently broken into the blood bank and stolen two containers of blood from the same group as Benyon's."

"Right." Kirk was pleased. "We're finally getting somewhere. There's a picture emerging of someone at work behind the scenes. Same when you were attacked, I suppose. I was asleep, you were knocked out and beaten."

"Yes," Spock agreed. "And the log entries that appeared in your room and in Briefing Room One were typed in, not voice activated. I checked the computer's own records, so anyone could have done them just by typing from a particular terminal."

"Ah!" Kirk challenged. "Then that takes us on to something we can't explain. I can see how the two attacks were carried out, I can understand the log entries, and I can see that I would have been so deep under that I didn't feel or hear things, but how do you explain the rearranged items and the use of the terminal in my room - even the battering of my hands?" He didn't mention the thread; that was too personal, and would have to be taken up with the culprit if and when he was found. "All that must have taken place in my room, but before most of the incidents I had security coded my lock. Whoever it was would have had to have known, or broken, the code on my door."

"Exactly," Spock agreed.

"But there's only you two..."

"Don't look at me!" McCoy interrupted. "I never did it."

Spock raised a questioning eyebrow.

"No," said Kirk, "I don't think it was you either, Mr. Spock."

They exchanged glances. All three, together, said, "Jackson!"

Jackson had been Chief of Security since the last Starbase, where he had replaced the outgoing Chief, who had retired at the end of a long and successful career in Starfleet Security.

"Jackson," repeated Kirk. "What do we actually know about the man?"

"Quite a lot, Captain," Spock supplied, crossing to Kirk's computer terminal. "His record is most impressive, and he came to us with very high recommendations." He paused, and frowned.

"What's the matter?" Kirk asked.

"I requested a run on Jackson's files. The computer has presented them, but there was an unusual delay before it divulged the information. If you will forgive me, I will set up a test programme to investigate the delay."

He did so, punching in a rapid series of characters. After a while he announced, "The computer is now involved in a process of self examination. It will tell us when it has analysed its apparent brief lapse in function. In the meantime, I have asked it to

display the data for us."

All three men gathered round the screen. They went through all the records on the file. Jackson's career had been short (he was 29), exemplary (he had risen rapidly through the ranks), and distinguished (he had been decorated twice for bravery, risking his own life to save comrades in danger.)

McCoy said he didn't think it sounded like the profile of a murderer. Beyond that, they all agreed that they liked the man. None of them had sensed anything untoward while they had been getting to know him over the past few weeks.

"Let's ask him," Kirk decided. "We'll send for him now." He turned to the intercom.

"A personal escort may be advisable, considering the circumstances," cautioned Spock.

Kirk agreed.

"There is an ensign from Security just outside," Spock reminded them.

Kirk opened the door and gave the ensign a direct order to collect three others from his team and then 'invite' Mr. Jackson to Kirk's quarters. Under no circumstances were they to allow the invitation to be refused.

Although puzzled, the ensign snapped a quick, "Yes, sir," and departed on his errand.

Kirk turned back to the cabin, smiling. "Decided you don't need a guard for me any more?"

Spock looked almost taken aback. "Captain, the guard was not there to watch you, but to ensure that no further harm came to you. The pattern of unusual events had become disturbing. I should have intervened earlier, when I first began to suspect that you were being drugged. Perhaps if I had Benyon would now be alive. I had hoped that the guard's presence would serve as a deterrent to anyone wishing you further harm."

Kirk didn't answer for a moment. What could he say? He had completely misunderstood Spock's motives, and Spock - as was so often the case - had only been concerned with his friend's welfare. Finally he stepped up to Spock and said simply, "I'm sorry." Then, "You mustn't recriminate yourself over Benyon; none of us could have foreseen the murder, and hindsight, as they say, is an inexact science."

Before anyone could say anything further the computer announced that it had completed its self analysis. Spock turned towards it, accepting Kirk's apology by simply not arguing the situation further. He asked aloud,

"Why was there a 1.36 second delay before Jackson's file was displayed?"

"The file was marked with a special coding," the computer announced in its usual style. "Ship's systems are on watch to report any requests for information regarding Jackson."

"Report?" Kirk was intrigued. "Report to whom?"

"Working." And again the computer lapsed into silence.

Jackson arrived with the escort, who were told to wait outside. Kirk invited him to take a seat, which he did. He was obviously perturbed by the nature and number of the escort, and the formal summons, but he had himself well under control.

"Captain," he said, looking around at the high-powered gathering, "is there something wrong?"

"Maybe, Mr. Jackson. Maybe." Kirk stood before him. "That's what we're trying to find out."

Jackson looked worried, but he didn't crumple under the scrutiny of the three senior officers. He sat up straight, held his chin high, and looked Kirk straight in the eye. "Then maybe I can help, sir."

Oh, this is a good man, thought Kirk. I want him on my team. Please don't let him be the guilty party. But duty forced him to be belligerent, and so began a series of questions.

They asked him if he'd ever been in Kirk's cabin uninvited; he said he hadn't. They asked him if he knew who had beaten Spock up; he told them his security teams were still investigating, but were not getting very far. They asked him several other questions to throw him off his guard, but he answered clearly, correctly, and intelligently.

Then they asked him if he'd killed Benyon. He leapt out of his chair.

"Sir, I'm not sure what this is all about, I don't know what you think I've done, but..."

"Sit down, Mister." Kirk pointed at the seat from where he stood.

"But sir, I..."

"I said sit!" snapped the Captain with such ferocity that even McCoy winced.

Jackson sat.

"How do you explain the fact that someone has entered my quarters on several occasions when I'd security-coded my door, and when no-one else knows the override?"

"Sir, Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy know..."

"What?" demanded Kirk, privately thinking that the man had guts, too. "Do you expect me to believe that my best friends, people I've known for years, would be sneaking around playing tricks on me and murdering people? You're the only other one who knew how, so you're the one who did it."

"No, sir."

"Well then, how do you explain it?"

"I can't explain it, sir." And he looked at the floor.

"Oh, you can't explain it. Well, perhaps you'd better..."

"Ready," interrupted the voice of the computer.

"Hold," ordered Kirk. "Well, Mr. Jackson, what do you say?"

Jackson bit his lip. There was a sheen of sweat on him, but again he looked straight up at Kirk. "Sir, are you charging me with anything?"

Kirk, Spock and McCoy exchanged glances. Kirk sighed.

"Relax, Mr. Jackson. We've got some puzzles to solve, and we're hoping you're not part of them." He turned to Spock. "What does the computer have to say?"

Spock asked it once more to whom it had been instructed to report if asked for Jackson's files.

"Kranst and Obvel," came the reply.

Kirk looked at Spock. "They're two of your team, aren't they? Two of the high-flyers from Starfleet's elite science squad."

Spock was about to confirm this when McCoy grasped Kirk's arm and said quietly, "Jim, look at Jackson. He's reacting to the two names."

Jackson was indeed reacting. He was sitting on the edge of his seat, hands on either side of his head, rocking slightly backwards and forwards. His head was down, he was gazing at the floor, and he was muttering.

"Kranst and Obvel. Obvel and Kranst." He gritted his teeth, and groaned. "I know those names. I do. I... I... I won't. I can't do it." And he reeled.

McCoy was at his side in a flash. He put a hand on Jackson's shoulder.

"Take it easy, lad. What is it? What's the matter?"

Jackson looked up. The sweat was pouring off him. "I don't know, Doctor. There's something... I can't..." He stood up too rapidly, toppling the chair, and began to pace the room, wringing his hands.

McCoy looked at Kirk and shrugged. "I can't work it out, Jim. It's as if something has triggered an unusual reaction."

"Benyon!" Jackson shouted suddenly. "Oh god! Benyon!" He ran to a wall, pounding his fists on it.

Kirk and McCoy tried to stop him before he hurt himself. He was obviously in some anguish. Then he raised an arm and began to make stabbing motions in the air, but jerked as though each motion was against his will, as though he fought with all his strength to resist. Kirk and McCoy grabbed an arm each, but he threw them off with the strength of three men.

He turned, his eyes too bright and too glazed. "Kranst and

Obvel," he said once more in a tortured, guttural voice, and he ran for the door.

Spock followed him, and before he was halfway across the room applied a neck pinch. Catching the young man's limp body he carried him into Kirk's sleeping area and laid him gently on the bed.

He returned and helped Kirk and McCoy to their feet. "Are either of you injured?" he inquired.

"No," puffed McCoy, shaking his head and rubbing a rib.

They looked at Kirk, who was cradling one of his bandaged hands, but he straightened.

"Just a twinge," he assured them. "What happened? Why did he suddenly get into such a frenzy?"

They entered the sleeping area.

"Captain," Spock began, "his reaction was quite remarkable. I believe we may be nearing the resolution of this mystery. I believe that Mr. Jackson has been placed under some form of control. If you will permit it?" And he indicated Jackson's still form,.

Kirk nodded.

The Vulcan sat down on the edge of the bed and reached over to touch Jackson very gently on the hand. Immediately, he reacted as though he had been scalded. His face contorted momentarily, and he snatched his hand away and stood up.

"Captain," he announced, waving away their concern, "it is as I feared. Mr. Jackson is under deep and sophisticated control, probably by hypnosis. It is a very strong and powerful control. If he is indeed physically responsible for the things that have occurred, it has been due to no fault of his. Indeed, as the good doctor will tell you, he may well have been suffering, forced to carry out actions that would normally be repulsive to him."

Kirk looked from Spock to McCoy. "Can we help him?"

"Yes," said McCoy. "With drugs, and maybe further hypnosis."

"I would like to help," offered Spock.

McCoy nodded and smiled an acknowledgement. He knew that the power and clarity of Spock's mind would great help Jackson's recovery. He knew also that the young man would require a great deal of counselling. Even though he hadn't done it knowingly, it would be very eerie to be told that he had stabbed someone to death. All those present were aware of that.

"As far as I'm concerned," Kirk spoke for all of them, "this young man is a battle casualty. Everything that can be done must be done for him. Meanwhile, I think we'd better pay someone a visit."

"I'll stay with him till he wakes," said McCoy, sitting down on the bed beside Jackson. "Security's just outside the door, so I can yell for help if he gets violent again."

Kirk nodded. Drawing Spock after him, he left his quarters. They rounded up a team of ten security men, and set off to Kranst's

and Obvel's rooms.

Before they were halfway there the bridge piped through a message from the shuttle bay, telling them that the two scientists in question had been held while attempting to steal a shuttle. Apparently alerted to impending discovery by the computer watch on Jackson's file, they had fled their quarters in haste, taking no belongings.

Kirk and Spock arrived in the shuttle bay to find them disarmed and cowering against the wall.

Kirk was very angry. A good man had died, Spock had been beaten, McCoy had been knocked out, and Jackson had been subjected to who knew what fiendish mind controls, and all because of these two. He didn't even stop to consider his own mental anguish; he was just enraged that his friends and colleagues had been so sorely used.

He walked straight past the shuttle bay's security guards, making a mental note to compliment Jackson later on the watchfulness of his men, and went straight up to Kranst and Obvel. Grabbing one by the throat with each hand he slammed them back against the wall.

"Why?" he said in a voice that was pure ice.

They trembled. Kirk squeezed.

"Why?" he demanded again, throttling harder.

Obvel began to choke. Spock came up behind Kirk. He said only one word.

"Jim."

Kirk let go and the two men sagged, coughing, almost trying to push themselves back through the wall to escape the wrath of the Captain.

"Benyon was such a know-it-all," whimpered Kranst. "He got all the glory. We worked and we worked, but it was always *him* that everyone talked about. It was always *his* results that were published. It was always *his* name that appeared on the articles, never ours. But we did the real work."

"Jealousy," breathed Kirk. "You mean to tell me all this was because you were *jealous*?" He was incredulous.

Obvel straightened. Taller and more self-assured than the easily led Kranst, he pushed away from the wall.

"Yes!" he almost spat at Kirk. "And he deserved to die, the self-righteous..." And he continued with a string of blasphemy and derision, fuelled by an obvious hatred, nurtured in a deranged mind.

"And you're no better," he directed at Kirk and Spock. "You and your praise. You and your 'Welcome aboard, Benyon. Good to have you and your team aboard, Benyon.' *His* team! Why *his* team? I'll show him!" He rambled on while Kranst mewed quietly by his side.

Kirk suddenly lost all his rage. "Take them away." He waved them off with a gesture of disgust. "Lock them up, and lock them up

good. We'll deliver them to the next Starbase for trial."

"Put them in a room with a Holsterman screen," instructed Spock. "One of them is an expert in hypnosis. We don't want one of the guards to be influenced and let them out."

"Good idea," Kirk nodded. "Do that."

The security team led away the still raving Obvel and his pathetic companion. The hangar bay seemed quiet. Kirk leaned against the wall with a sigh. He thought of all that had passed, and hoped that events would return to normal - or as normal as they ever could be on a Starship.

He felt tired, but he knew all their wounds would heal. He felt most deeply for Jackson, hoping fervently that the incidents of the past few weeks would not affect the young officer's career. Spock would help the young man, he knew; would break the control and set him on a course for recovery.

At the thought of Spock he remembered that he was not alone, and glanced up. The Vulcan was looking at him.

"What?"

Did Spock smile?

"I was just thinking, Captain, that you look as though you need a good night's sleep."



FRIENDSHIP

We cannot say it lies between us,
For the sake of our feuding;
We do not call each other by it,
But we know it's true;
We daren't show our caring
To protect our opposition;
We haven't allowed its overtures
To affect our antagonism;
We cannot express our sympathy
Or our fellow-feeling;
We are combatants and colleagues -
And the best of friends.

Maggie Symon



SHORE LEAVE

by

Nancy Johnson

Preface

Far, far away from Earth, close to what would eventually be the boundary of UFP space, the troubled planet of Adronis rotated within its fields of poisonous gases; its force-shield was like a cloak, concealing underground life.

Slowly, over a great lapse in time, the atmosphere changed. Hidden life forms watched, testing, anxious to try again. Slowly they appeared above ground, new ideas built on old ones, planning, constructing their long planned city in the dry, now radiation free, desert of Atin.

In the following century, scientific, telepathic minds applied extended thoughts into the new mediums of transfer, using the ever swirling fields of energy as a greater base of power; broadcasting thoughts into space with great force. Various planets had tried to respond to the strange signals, unable however to communicate for they could not understand fully what they were 'hearing'. This gradually reached the attention of the United Federation of Planets, and eventually came to the notice of the planet Vulcan. Vulcan scientists recognized the messages and the people - and opened Adronis to contact from space.

Captain's Log

The battle weary Enterprise and crew are making an emergency trip to Adronis, with emergency equipment to replace failing units in a scientific project there. I have requested, complained, threatened, manipulated, and finally called on favours, to secure a possible week's leave for my crew in the dry protected city of Atinis, in the Atin desert. For the last forty-eight hours, the Enterprise shuttles have been adapted, with shielding that will protect my people as they transfer to the city. Beaming to this world is not possible because of atmospheric peculiarities.

Adronis travel pods for personnel use will be available at the point of arrival.

A pack of dog-like creatures resembling bloodhounds were hunting the huge cats that had been killing cattle on the local ranches in the valley. The grigos had been running for hours, their owners left far behind them; they hunted without guidance and would, after making their kill, return home, for grigos were one-man dogs.

The youngest grigo, not yet fully mature, still wore the thick golden blond shaggy coat of a year-old puppy. As he grew older, he would change to tan and then to light brown. Isha Attino, his owner, had named the dog 'Tr'x'. He was really too young to be here

now, but his lineage promised greatness in hunting ability, and his owner could not resist the opportunity to display his grigo's potential.

In time the pack broke up. Tr'x had been running, following his sixth sense, since before day break. Intuition turned him through thinner wooded areas with larger trees, near flowing stream beds, checking rocky inclines. The land had become damp as he began to climb into the higher mountains. He was alone, the other grigos having followed other leads, most running along the wide banks of the Citten river, far below him in the valley. He shivered, hearing one baying as it found a killer cat. Tr'x had found the faint scent of his own cat in several places; he was too young and too inexperienced to realise that it was days old, and that the cat was far ahead of him. Standing in the shade of a rocky wall, he drank from a shallow spring-fed pool. The cat had drunk and rested here too, and something told him it was going home.

A steady run took him through the early afternoon, the scent more constant now. He found the brief remains of a kill the cat had made and paused where it lay to rest after eating. It had rambled across a ravine, scratching its back on a low hanging limb, but its journey was always forward. The dog began to understand; the cat always travelled over the lower part of the heights, staying on rocky surfaces where possible. When it went into a clearing it was to catch food. He studied the deep prints its weight left in the cool wet sand between boulders at the base of steep mountain sides. He followed through the early evening, whining to himself as darkness fell upon him, and he was forced to stop. The air was cold, and he found comfort in a dried, rotted out tree trunk that had fallen and wedged itself in dense growth.

With dawn he was travelling again, stopping to eat the roots of a sava plant that smelt good. Crossing a small glen, he found the prints and claw marks of his cat, which had first drunk and then jumped the creek. Climbing steadily, he discovered feathers, where it had eaten again. He sniffed the feathers; were they good to eat?

Studying the terrain ahead, he knew the cat would travel up the valley, and must go over the boulders at the end of it, into the higher mountains. Abandoning the slower search, he raced towards the high land, following instinct and developing his own hunting technique. A sense of freedom raced through his veins; it was the hunt - the need to discover.

A steady run through early afternoon found the scent stronger. The cat was growing careless. He found crushed flowers where the trail crossed a clearing, claw marks in torn grass where his quarry jumped. The distance shortened between them. The cat was on the first of the high mountain steps that meant safety, becoming aware of something not too far behind her. She looked back, her skin crawling and twitching with a warning shiver. With a flick of her tail, she began the long stretched lope of her breed that eats away the miles with speed.

Tr'x sensed the change in her lope, the awareness of danger in her. The chase proper had begun, climbing steadily into higher plateaus.

Gone! He trembled with excitement... back track, she had to be here somewhere. *The high rocks - she's taken to the high rocks; go around, run - run.* He twisted and slipped between boulders, always upward; mounting them where he could. Hot and panting, he followed

through the heights over several mountains, into unknown territory, - glancing around him in a quick survey as he mounted a cliff. Home, and what he once was, were gone. Lungs pumped cold air to needy arteries, muscles not yet fully developed were strengthening. Pause. Breath. Relax. Renew the life system.

The light was changing, but there was a difference as she tired. Blood on the stones here, she'd been careless, and could be hurt. He smelled her fear. The stronger endurance had been with the young dog. The cat was faltering, but still, home and peace lay ahead in the almost inaccessible cave where her young would be soon be born.

Tr'x gained with each bound; she was not far ahead now, headed for the cliffs. Faster!! Over the ledge - across the meadow, through the first of thinner mountain forests; climbing steadily, out onto the rocks again, her sureness said she had climbed here before.

The scent changed.

Tr'x stopped, quivering. Two scents. Blood - *Man!* *There's a man up and to the left.* The cat had run straight up, but might circle back for the man. Strong muscles thrust him forward, upward in a new surge of speed, as he chose to defend the man, sheering left and found him lying at the base of a cliff, near a crashed shuttlecraft

Tr'x sniffed the unconscious man. The blond head lay in his own blood. Tr'x stood alert, watchful; he checked out the area for attack and defence, and returned to stand guard. The dog's breath returned to normal. As the air cooled him, his fur returned to its natural fluffy appearance.

The man's breathing changed. A soft moan escaped, hazel eyes struggled to open. Scraped and skinned, a shaky arm reached to shield his face. Swallowing, struggling to climb out of the darkness, he tried again. His body jerked with shock as he saw the shaggy monster standing so near. Quickly rolling away from danger, turning, he attempted to spring to his feet, only to crumple to the rocks again. Pain coursed through him, his hand flew to his hip - no phaser, no communicator, and nothing to use as a weapon nearby. With every ounce of breeding and training in his character, he faced his enemy.

The 'enemy' sat down to watch the man, still frozen as he was in a waiting defensive position.

"What - ?" Slowly he lowered his arms, realizing there was to be no attack. The animal's head tipped to one side, studying the human being.

"Well - what do you think of me," grinned the man, "and what are you?"

Slowly a very shaggy tail separated itself from the ball of fur, and began to sweep the hard rock surface. A longing to know and be accepted began to grow. The shaggy head dipped down as his back end began to wiggle. Front paws stretched out in small advances toward mankind. With chin bobbing up and down, the animal gave a near likeness to an answering grin. Giving small advancing pats with each paw, the dog began a twisting, wiggling approach, with anticipation in his every move. The Captain laughed, tension

and readiness fading away. *Oh God, what a relief.* He opened his arms, hugging his new friend, talking about circumstance and good luck, while accepting all the love being offered and returning it in like measure.

"You must belong to someone," he groaned, feeling how much he was hurting, "which means you can help me." Glancing past the fur and wet tongue, he spied his communicator a few feet away. After some moments of 'turning loose' from his new friend, he twisted around, pulling himself along the rough surface toward his communicator.

"Uh - no good. A repair for Scotty." Clipping it over his belt he appraised the surrounding area. *Sunset - atmosphere getting colder; need shelter. Nothing. Rocky walls, shuttle too far... Wait - a shadow, could be a space under a ledge. No strength. Roll... dizzy... stop. Gather myself... organize... roll, roll. Ohh, my head. Just a little further. Low roof. One more time... Losing control... Soft, warm, the dog is helping me... once more... roll.* He was panting for breath. *\Spock - four hundred twenty eight point two miles, north north west of the city. Assur mountains. Longitude 186 degrees, latitude 84...*

* * * * *

Spock, ever efficient, had refused shore leave. To rest, for him, was to meditate, not to waste energy becoming enthused with the social activities of others. That was not rest. He had spent the morning working in the lab - a pleasant activity for him. Now he was on his way to his cabin and his computer.

Spock came to a sudden halt. He had just lost the warm mind sense of his Captain's well being. Denied fear spread through him with icy finger tips. Gently probing the emptiness for some thin contact with Jim's Human element, he accepted that the Human was unconscious and no longer functioning.

Turning to the computer, his Vulcan mask of serenity in place, he began his search. A short time later, he straightened, signalling the bridge.

"Lieutenant, connect me with the Adronis Government. I wish to speak to their Prime Minister, Mr. R'yce."

"Yes, Mr. Spock," Uhura answered, fingers flying over familiar keys. "Coming in now, sir."

"Mr. Spock," said a very pleased diplomat. "Welcome to the planet Adronis. I look forward to a reunion with your Captain this evening. Please join us; your presence here would be welcome."

"Thank you, sir." Spock stood with his hands behind his back. "But duty calls, and circumstances do not permit. However, I do need your help. Captain Kirk left for Adronis in a shuttle at 0900 your time and he has not reported in. Using your Government's telekinetic satellite communications, I find no record of James Kirk in your city. Due to the electromagnetic belt surrounding your planet, use of our sensors to search for him is not possible. It is highly unlikely in such a peaceful culture, but the Captain has disappeared. I suspect a possible injury."

"Captain Kirk hurt?" He was already moving.

"Search parties are standing by," finished the Vulcan.

"Have them report to the council hall. Our city's peace force will organise the search and rescue from there. Adronis out."

"Mr. Spock?" said a startled Uhura.

Glancing at the faces turned toward him around the bridge, he thought, *Of course, these are his people and they care.* In his usual calm voice he announced, "The Captain has been injured, and is unconscious. Search teams from the Enterprise will join with search forces on the ground." He left the bridge.

Sulu turned his chair, watching the Vulcan disappear. "I wonder what happened?"

"He would not have time to get drunk," Chekov commented, adding, "I am going to be in one of the security parties," as he got up. "I am off duty in ten minutes."

"Go now. I'll cover for you," Sulu said.

Uhura continued monitoring ground reports, but her mind echoed an unanswered question. How did Spock know? Curious, she watched computer readouts. The computer in use was in Spock's cabin.

* * * * *

Spock's fingers stopped briefly. His mind blazed with formulas, and new theories, but the Human side of him related to time. The first search parties had gone down 1.328 hours ago; they had not reported yet. Part of Spock's attention shifted; his eyes assumed a distant look as though he followed another's movements. He paused, rising to his feet; assuming his Vulcan mask he faced the door; four - three - two, and a loud insistent buzzing sounded.

"Come."

"Spock! What do you think you are doing?"

"Dr. McCoy, I am waiting."

"Waiting! I came out of surgery to hear that Jim's missing, and you're just standing here waiting? What the devil's the matter with you, Spock? Get moving! I'll get my bag, and - why are you just standing there? Jim needs us." The Doctor stopped. "Where is he?"

"Unknown," came the hollow reply.

"Humph! You pointed eared circuitry, where'd the call come from?"

"There was no call, Doctor. Search parties have been organized by the Adronis Government with assistance from the Enterprise."

"Well, I'm not going to sit here doing nothing, at least I'll be in the city helping. Jim is your friend too, how can you just stand there? No, don't tell me, I don't want to hear it." He turned and left at a near run.

Silence. *Four - three - two -* The door swished and McCoy stood in the entrance. "Waiting?"

"Yes, Doctor, I was waiting for you. I estimated you would arrive 3.6 minutes after surgery and finishing up. You are on schedule." The Vulcan was already thinking of other possibilities for their search.

"Spock!" McCoy glared at the raised eyebrows.

Scanning the planet below through the computer screen, Spock observed, "Doctor, the season below is late spring, a warmer spring than you know on Earth. He is in no danger of suffering from exposure."

The quiet efficient background sounds of the powerful ship filled the silence between the two men. McCoy considered the ridged shoulders and the straight spine under the blue science uniform, looking for tell-tale signs of denied stress. *Hidden*, he thought. *No one would know you care, but that clenched fist is like a red flag - you logical fraud.* "Spock," he assured, "they'll find him. Adronis has its own rescue equipment, built for the conditions there. They'll call you. You haven't eaten yet today; come with me and we'll eat together."

Considering the kindness, and the applied psychology behind the request, Spock said, "Thank you, Bones, but it is not possible for me to consume food until the Captain is safe."

Ice blue eyes relented as McCoy accepted the vagaries of Vulcan heredity. "I know, Spock." He sighed and left Spock to his thoughts.

Going to his desk, Spock steeped his hands into a pyramid. Clearing his mind, he began the mental disciplines of search for his Captain once again. *Blankness.* He closed his eyes, seeking the Vulcan control through his training. Some moments later, he felt the haziness of a returning consciousness. Pain - head splitting, body jarred, bruised, disorientated - puzzled searching for rationality, awareness drifting in and out. Illness in the pit of his stomach; unable to move; terrible brightness - blind, go back and seek the blackness of oblivion. Slow deep breaths, searching, relying on Star Fleet training. Then shock! Great fear, heart pounding - muscles grabbing - action! Silent screams for strength - no defence. Breath held - waiting - surprise! Warmth - joy. (And then his own surprise, for the essential message reached him.)
 //Spock! Four hundred twenty eight point two miles north north west
 -// The message was complete.

Spock stilled his trembling. Never had he been such a part of his Human friend's strengths and frailties. With closed eyes he reviewed the emotions Kirk experienced, accepted and lived through. Always the inner value of his friend showing through, facing, changing, making all things work for the better. Taking a deep breath, he gathered his own Vulcan heritage around him. Jim was alive. With cool logic, he addressed the intercom.

"Mr. Scott, I will require the Galileo in 2.3 minutes. You have the Enterprise. Now - I have worked out a new theory in endogenous electromagnetic energy, dealing with electro-negative units and dielectric flux. An altered formula in light guides has eliminated electro-positive strength, creating a negative space between two points. I will set up a responding platform as a beacon as soon as we have reached a secure position. Search for us in the higher frequencies. The difference in technology has been programmed."

Scott ran from the con. "Sulu, take the chair!" He rushed to the turbolift, zipping to his office, dashing from engineering to shuttle bay, with just enough time to thrust a brandy canteen into a punctual Vulcan's hands. "Safe journey Mr. Spock." With a nod, Spock entered the shuttle; Scott retreated and automatic doors shut him back into the Enterprise.

Spock had begun his mission with Lt. Avery and Lt. Swanson. John Swanson was an outstanding pilot, who had held the shuttle steady through many atmospheric disturbances. Lt. Avery, one of their best navigators, had the experience and dependability to complete a good team. The two men would take the Galileo back to the Enterprise.

* * * * *

Scott turned slowly, his active mind recalling everything he had ever read about the space theory of negative black light. His thoughts were interrupted by McCoy's arrival. "Spock?" The question was shouted.

"He's just gone in the shuttle," Scott replied.

Looking a little desperate, not yet over accepted shock, McCoy faltered, "He'll need me."

"Aye, and me too, Leonard. Come on and let's see what he's done w/ the laws of physics." They made their way to the bridge.

As the turbo lift doors opened, Scott was explaining what Spock had said to the Doctor. The bridge crew, maintaining ship's status while in orbit, glanced as one to acknowledge and listen.

"From what I've read, Doctor, the electromagnetic energy around the planet is a belt of positive protons. This is positive - active energy in motion. Energy in motion creates kinetic energy, which the people of Adronis have utilized for communications, sound links and transportation. The steady barrier of magnetic energy registers to us in the form of static. It also prohibits the use of our technical equipment." Using both hands in self expression, Scott paused, then added, "Unless we're on designated wave lengths through one of the planetary satellites.

"Then," he continued, "another one of their major problems they created themselves. Almost thirty four hundred years ago, in a planet wide war, they bombarded themselves with nuclear bombs, destroying their civilization by polluting the atmosphere with radiation. The gamma rays are no longer as strong, but the result, back then, influenced their physical evolution. They had to adjust to survive. Meanwhile, electron negative properties - evolved in the magnetic belt - and the stratosphere below the belt, have helped maintain a high acid content in the clouds. Any moisture that forms above the planet and falls, rain, fog, dew, even snow, affects the planet."

"But, Mr. Scott," questioned Uhura, "how did the people survive?"

Looking at Uhura, Scott considered. "Ahh, lassie, from what I've read, nature helped them too. The planet acts as a filter. Liquids with any impurities become pure as they sift through the earth. Even the acid base changes; underground water is sweet. So they moved underground as a race, and have adjusted slowly as the

acid surface has become modified. Now they live topside in the dry areas, and perhaps in other places that we know nothing about yet. They are an intelligent race, having developed technically advanced living facilities. They use the plentiful energy around their planet for many things."

"The high acid regions are the wet areas, such as the oceans," continued Sulu.

"Aye, laddie, or the mountains, or low-lying places. Not being able to penetrate the ring that shields the planet has left us with a lot of unanswered questions, in many areas."

"What about food, Mr. Scott?" asked Uhura.

"It had to be grown wherever they were. Their early history shows that those who now live in the desert city came from mountains to the east of the desert. This would imply fresh water and underground food systems."

"What kind of food would grow without sunlight?" wondered Sulu.

"They developed their own techniques. I imagine 'tis easier if ye are a vegetarian.

"Either you are, or you become one," Uhura smiled. "Mr. Spock would like that."

"Mr. Spock may not have that long to experience any life style," snorted the Doctor. "That acid will burn him too - skin is skin!"

"That's why he wouldna' risk you too, Doctor," reasoned Scott. "He'll bring the Captain back to us, then we'll need you for both of them." Nodding at McCoy, he turned to the bridge and ship's business. "Mr Sulu, Spock has left a new theory in the computer; let's see what he's about."

* * * * *

Ignoring everyone, McCoy threw himself into cleaning away every bit of paper work on his desk. Sympathizing, Chris Chapel left him alone. She too was worried and had said a prayer for both officers; and if she had thought mostly of Mr. Spock, who can blame her? She admired both leaders, but Mr. Spock...

McCoy was still steaming over the decision - logical or not - made by the Vulcan. Yes, he fumed, *I do resent their leaving me. Why do I want to be with them every time they stick their necks out? Lord knows they need me afterwards... But when did I start needing them? Some day - I'll be too late; and how will I help the one that's left? And something else! They never stop to think that I care too. Damn you, Jim Kirk! When you get back in sick bay, I'll keep you there for a solar month. Oh lord - I feel awful.*

* * * * *

Some hours later, Scott leaned against the open door, knocking lightly with the back of his knuckles. "Would ye join me, Leonard? I think we both need a drink."

"I've been waiting for you. Every time those two do this, I become an alcoholic!" McCoy pushed back his chair, reaching for a

bottle of brandy, and he poured a glass. Scott poured his own whisky, and sat down as McCoy continued. "Well, Scotty, what did you find out? Don't get technical, just tell me what Spock did."

"Mr. Spock," said Scott, as he gathered the facts in his mind, "somehow found the time to diagram his theory into the computer; giving statistics and calculated dimension peaks over predictable power levels."

"Leonard, what we're calling negative black light - it isn't a light at all. It's a beam of sound - or, rather, the absence of sound. In all this complete barrier of active vibrations and live static, Spock's theory will shoot a beam that will penetrate the atmosphere without being affected by the outside influence. Aye, do you realize what he's done?" Scott sat shaking his head. "Spock will set up a receiving station to receive a transporter beam sent from the Enterprise. We have only to set the coordinates and beam them up!"

"There's more too. Ye canna' change the laws of physics. Yet Spock's ability to redesign known factors within these laws will aid the people here tremendously. They'll be able to stop depending on shuttlecraft and aircars; this will let them form corridors into space."

"Corridor, like a star gate?" exclaimed McCoy.

"Aye. The energy field which has forbidden their journey into space can be channelled. Mr. Spock hasna' removed the barrier, he discovered how to neutralize a portion between the ship and the planet. When the beam is turned off, their problem is still there, and the barrier will still protect the planet from outside interference." They considered advanced science in silence for a moment, until Scott grinned, refilling their glasses. "A toast, Leonard; to new theories."

McCoy, slowly relaxing said, "And to men who create them."

Scott, on his own line of thought, said, "Men, aye, and women too, but Mr. Spock is an exception. I admire him verra much."

"Yes. Don't tell him I said so, but Spock has a source of continual inspiration! You couldn't hold Jim Kirk in one place if you sat on him... and our Captain looks for trouble. Vulcan loyalty to his Captain doesn't touch Vulcan friendship for his Captain. Half of Spock is in danger most of the time. What does that do to an austere Vulcan steeped in logic? It inspires him... You know, they fit together like a hand in a glove. They survive, but they suffer. Most of the time it's Jim, with that unemotional Vulcan mask checking his condition. And I've seen Jim reach out for Spock like it's his contact with stability." Silence, as the Doctor thought of the times he'd watched Jim regaining consciousness. "And Spock," he continued. "Have you ever seen how Jim walks through that door when Spock is unconscious? I'm relieved when I check Spock late at night and find the Captain's asleep in a chair by his bed. At least then I can put Jim in the next bed, or send him to his cabin." With a deep sigh, the Doctor admitted, "I know they live on the edge, because that's where they keep me. What will I do, Scotty, when I lose one of them?"

"Dinna think of sic' a thing, Leonard," soothed his friend, breaking into a light accent. "They survive, one because of the oth'r. 'Tis a team we have, and ye're part of it. Ye're the way

back, Doctor; aye, for all of us." Scott's face changed as his eyes sparkled. "Did ye know Spock took two of the Vulcan desert cloaks, two phasers, a tricorder, recorder, medikit, food supplements and a bottle of brandy?"

"You helped," grinned the Doctor.

"Aye," laughed Scott, "for Jim. He may need it." With an open yawn he continued, "I've been on duty for 23 hours. I need to sleep for the next four or five anyway. I'll get Sulu to call me if Spock signals. I want to handle the beaming procedure personally."

"I checked the two men who flew down with Spock," McCoy commented. "They're all right. Scotty, that shuttle cut through the energy field with a tail like a shooting star. It looked unsafe to me."

"Leonard, the ship was stabilized against outside forces; it was quite safe. Get some rest; you'll be needed when they come home."

* * * * *

Jim Kirk opened his eyes in early light, to watch thick fog suspended about a foot off the ground; no movement, just the steady dripping sound of water to complete the scene. *How eerie*, he thought, turning his head, trying to move. Every ache he had ever experienced seemed to flood through him. *Ohhh Lord - so stiff - but I have to move for my own sake.*

The low shelter had more than covered both of them. His slight movements woke his new friend, who promptly showed his teeth in a grin, and licked Kirk's face. The dog received a return hug, woofed, and began making small throaty whines of acknowledgement. Crawling on his belly now, he disappeared through a split in the back of the cave. As Kirk watched without moving, a shaggy head reappeared to look at him. "Woof!" it announced.

"Okay - okay, I'm coming." Every muscle complained as he rolled over to crawl slowly along on his belly. The shaggy head was gone again. As he began to limber up a little, he noticed there were other circumstances that were rewarding. Each time his head dropped to the tunnel floor in exhaustion, the cold stones against his face gave relief. As he tired he drifted off, relaxing briefly, becoming alert to a wet nose and tongue checking him out again. After some eighty feet, the tunnel opened into a larger cave. Other passages left it. Cold damp air touched his face. He shivered, gazing in amazement at a wonderland of small glowing micro growth. He touched the soft yellow living surface of protruding rock to find it running with water. He wiped the trickle of liquid from his fingers, and slowly gained his feet to study the enlightened interior.

Stalagmites in various heights and widths sprang from the uneven floor, glowing light green. Stalactites counterbalanced them; fluorescent pinnacles, polka dotted green ceilings, lit passages that led further underground. Clusters of yellow and orange fungi grew in drifts along the floor and walls. Patches of speckled mushrooms topped flat areas along ledges. Minutes slipped by, as Kirk's mind recorded this natural sculpture unspoiled by Man. Thoughts fled back to reality, as his eyes followed paw prints that marked a trail in light green mould.

"Woof." Another call from deeper in the cave system brought Kirk's head up, to spot the smooth outline of golden coat silhouetted against the fluorescent green. "Coming," he answered, creating another legend of space as he left the prints of a Starship Captain with those of his dog in a lasting memory.

They followed the canine's sense of direction, descending or climbing rises. They discovered hidden pools in the rushing sounds of melting snow that filled river beds. Kirk risked drinking when he saw the dog lapping thirstily, trusting the native beast's instinctive sense that it was safe. They waded the eerily lit streams, following a draught of fresh air into a larger open chamber that was lit from a bright, hazy sky. He stood amazed. *No fog on this side of the mountain, Spock. Glaring sky, and green, green growth everywhere. Doesn't look dangerous,* and he sighed.

He leaned against the cave entrance, adjusting his eyes to the light. Tired now, every limb aching, he turned back to the wall and slowly began to slide into a sitting position. One shaky arm rose to circle the dog as they gazed over an alpine meadow. Blue flowers nestled at their feet, clinging to cool areas along the base of the rocks, flourishing in shady protected places. "Sort of looks like blue columbine from home, Wolf. Why not? Blue columbine to offset the glaring sky." Webs of purple stems and roots ran through patches of pink and crimson, adding their perfume to the mountain air. Knee high meadow grass, bending, dipping, tipped light yellow flowers this way and that. Tiny wild pink roses threaded thorny stems along the ground, as they spread themselves over low shrubs, climbing where they could. Closing his eyes he murmured, "So like home." *Spock, just for an hour - it's the most beautiful place... everything I've got hurts...* Warmth comforted him and he slept.

It hadn't been an hour when a hand fastened itself to his shoulder, giving a gentle shake. The deep voice whispered, "Captain?"

"Spock?" sighed a groggy Captain with his familiar smile. "I've been waiting for you."

"Yes, I see you have." Spock began to unload his gear, looking for medical equipment. "I arrived moments before a heavy fog settled against the mountain, and was forced to take shelter in a cave. This led me to an entrance higher up the slope. Jim, this is a series of high peaks and mountain chains divided by deep valleys. This valley goes down an estimated three point six miles. It is sheltered on all sides, its width varying up to four hundred and eight four feet. The cave systems in each range are linked - the people may have lived in them at one time, with the porous earth acting as a filter. This water is safe to drink." Glancing into the meadow, he added, "This area has survived with acid content of one point two percent."

"Yes, I knew - somehow. Ummm. Tell me, Spock," he grinned, "how did you find me so quickly?"

"Your dog, Captain. He met me as I descended, and led me here."

"Wolf?" Remembering, Kirk began to search for him with startled eyes.

"Rr-woof," came a low bark from Spock's side, as a cold black nose presented itself.

Chuckling deep in his throat, hazel eyes lit with pleasure, he smiled. "Man's best friend." Dark eyes acknowledged the relaxed communication between the two; but Spock registered that his active Captain had not moved a muscle.

The med-scanner hummed, as Spock ran it over him. "I don't think there's anything broken, Spock," Kirk said, "just badly bent." Going on in a more business voice, "It gets very cold up this high. Just now the day is warm, but we need to move."

The humming stopped. Spock enlightened him, "Jim, we are 7236.75 feet from the top of this mountain. This meadow will not see snow again until the season changes, indeed it is in full..."

"Blossom," Kirk finished.

Spock considered the obvious as he put away the scanner, knowledge of Jim's thoughts crossing his mind. Turning his eyes back to study the injured man, he asked, "Captain, are you going to be arbitrary about your own safety?"

"Spock," he whispered looking at his friend, "you can read me like a book. All this is - fascinating. So much history and scientific data to discover and record. How can we just - go home?" He paused, smiling, "Shore leave?"

Temptation loomed with an unquenchable yearning. *Freedom to discover the unknown with the only man who could stand at his side in life.*

"McCoy?" Spock stated.

"Uhh." Kirk groaned, looking at the cave roof. "Once Bones gets a look at me, he'll bury me in sickbay."

"For at least a week, probably longer since you did not wait for him to accompany you. Jim, you have a slight concussion, you will need his help."

"Spock, you have the medikit."

"I am not a doctor."

"I'll be good."

Deep brown eyes sparkled in a sober Vulcan face, "He's furious and he's worried."

"I know," he sighed. Taking a deep breath, Kirk closed his eyes briefly. "Mr. Spock? May I please borrow your communicator?"

Securing one from his pack, Spock flipped it open, placing it in the Captain's hand. "Thank you," Kirk whispered, and in a command voice that brooked no nonsense said, "Enterprise."

"Captain Kirk!" exclaimed an excited Scots voice. "Are you all right, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Scott. Losing altitude, I found myself unable to climb or change direction. After a rough landing, I was able to roll free, seeking shelter in a system of mountain caves. Mr. Spock or I will contact you in two hours." His voice softened. "Scotty, we're all right. Tell McCoy I'll report to sickbay as soon as this

is over. Kirk out."

Taking the communicator from the open hand and attaching it to the Captain's belt, Spock commented. "You do not look all right." Removing the ragged shirt, cleaning away inground dirt and gravel, spraying plastiskin over cuts, scrapes, and a badly grazed shoulder blade, Spock told Kirk exactly what was wrong with him. "You're very bruised; and you will probably be stiff for some days. Very colourful shades of purple are beginning to show... Be still." He touched the blond head, cleaning, administering, and removing the sharp edges of pain with a light meld. Here was the warm welcome of friendship, and concern radiating from the Human. The same completeness filled the Vulcan soul as he quietly acknowledged, *We've made it again; you're alive.* Giving the Captain a pressurized shot in the shoulder, he produced two pills and the brandy flask. "Rest a few minutes more. The pills are vitamin supplements, and the brandy is a gift from Mr. Scott."

"God bless Scotty." Kirk smiled as he enjoyed the warmth of returning energy and taste. Looking at Spock, he grinned. "I feel much better." Beginning to gather himself to rise, he found Vulcan strength lifting him to his feet. "Thank you Spock." He turned towards the open meadow.

They followed faint paths along creek banks, seeking the woods beyond the meadow. *Peaceful portals*, thought the Captain, allowing the quietness and beauty to relax him. Spock silently agreed. The stream they followed disappeared over stones into a broken waterfall, dividing, spreading itself thinly over large, flat, tree shaded boulders, smoothed by eons of time. Green fern abounded along wet edges. Watching their footing, they followed the slope. The adventurist involvement in discovery brought a good feeling of companionship and satisfaction to both men. Stooping suddenly, Kirk listened, soft sounds turning him aside. Tiny openings like miniature caves, made notable by clustered fern and fungi around their mouths, trickled small streams of water. Tracing the nearest stream with his eyes, Kirk glanced at Spock.

"The mountains are porous, the heights will have many openings." The tricorder hummed. "The fungi would be safe for you to eat. It is filled with minerals necessary for animal growth. It is another means of survival."

"All very colourful too. I wonder why it's luminous?" Turning, Kirk followed the main stream, hard packed with stones that kept the channel in its bed. They walked under large, sturdy, age old trees that stood as sentinels of the valley, splattering the cool shaded earth with patches of light.

The Captain descended slowly against the pull of gravity. The dog had forged ahead. They had climbed over more than one steep slope, using vines to steady themselves. Stepping from covered greenness onto a ledge, Kirk stopped, breathing deep, a feeling of well being flooding him despite his aches. *Great galaxies, it's beautiful! The smell of the woods, so clean and untouched.* Eagerness, and the exhilaration of the moment, renewed his strength. *Dear God, to be a part of this!* Laughing, he abandoned caution, going down the hill at a run, dodging rocks, sliding to place hands down in a hard slap as he swung his body over low boulders then charged forward again, leaping over a narrow stream to rush between two large trees, ending as he threw an arm around a small trunk and fell, rolling into soft meadow grass. Waiting for the dizziness to pass, he lay with his eyes closed, smelling the

sweetness of meadow flowers. Briefly opening one eye, and realizing where he was, he lay utterly content.

Spock had shivered again as he followed his Captain into the cooler shade, recording with his tricorder. Concentration broke sharply as Kirk began to run; he threw himself after his friend. His plunge was one of dire urgency. He grabbed the last tree trunk to stop himself, looked round and quickly rushed to the fallen man.

Dark eyes watched, curious at Kirk's feeling of freedom, of challenge accepted and overcome. His eyes were open now, sparkling, his head tipped back in happiness. Deep breaths and laughter invaded Vulcan logic as a Human arm slid around the Vulcan shoulder in a half hug and Kirk lay back again in the flowers. "Spock, that was grand."

A large blur of something solid ploughed between them, sending both men into alarm as they rolled apart, going into positions of defence. Kirk's was only momentary; he fell with a groan. Spock checked the dog with a glance, rushing to gather Kirk again in a renewed mind touch, and reinstate the pain control.

Silent trembling revealed the inner damage, as shock blasted away Jim's strength *\\T'hy'la, my brother, open your mind to me, let me in.*

Every bruise ached again, subsiding only to the absorbing alien presence. Coolness comforted, extinguishing flames of static. With relief Kirk felt a familiar warmth that encircled him. The Human mind responded, in words not to be spoken but sung from his young heart; *\\Great love... great love.* Spock withdrew slowly leaving a bond again with his Captain.

"Spock?" the Captain whispered.

"It was the sudden intrusion of the animal. The shock caused you to repel the mind touch as you rolled. This left you as you were when I found you this morning."

"How shall I thank you?" he sighed. "What is your logical reason for not letting me know you were helping me?"

"You must remain free to dream and discover your own solutions. I will not allow you to feel inhibited. I have accepted your words of long ago, that I am welcome in your mind, to shelter you. It is the only way you could endure as you must endure."

\\Spock, you are going to find constant Human thoughts incompatible with Vulcan's neat and orderly logic. I am emotional.

\\I do not know your thoughts, I only help you to resume your normal life.

\\Logical. I can only say thank you again. There seems to always be so much unsaid.

\\There are no secrets in the meld. You see me as I am; emotional where you are concerned. When you beam into danger without me, I live with anxiety and uncertainty. When you are hurt McCoy rushes you away. I need to touch you, to know your state of shock and help you. Spock's mind focussed on his friend's great needs when he lay injured. *\\When I enter your mind, I find you fighting to hold on; you examine me, questioning; your ship, the*

crew, the enemy. I am able to strengthen you for healing, to set your mind at ease and give you peace. We are as one, strength flows between us.\\

\\My friend, when did you become such a part of me?\\

\\It is said I do not understand love. You are my friend, as well as my Captain. Your life is more important to me than my own. I am always concerned for your well being and peace of mind. You are the brother I never had, the companion my breeding denied me. Through my existence, I have sought the man who can stand beside me. We are as one, known and understood.\\

\\Soul mates in every universe - closer than a brother. Thank you, my friend.\\ Kirk grinned. "Now I know you are with me, it shall make no difference." Then he broke into laughter as Spock answered in thought, \\Except in your behaviour.\\ Kirk was still grinning as he said, "We have an audience."

Spock checked the grin and the laughing eyes before he turned to the canine sitting at a distance in the flowers. The dog's head was tipped as he studied the two men.

"Wolf?" called the Captain, freeing the dog to rush forward and end up in the Captain's arms. Spock watched the antics tip Kirk over, laughing, holding - talking to a quivering body of fur.

The Enterprise was Kirk's ship, but pets were not encouraged by Starfleet. How would it be possible to bring a pet for the whole crew on board? "Jim, it grows late. We need to find a shelter."

Sitting up, Kirk glanced at the sky, assuming command. "We'll need a dry cave and fire. Spock, I saw a stream - "

"We'll investigate and find it after you have rested."

\\Mother hen,\\ echoed through the meld, as Spock helped him to his feet.

\\You promised to be good,\\

\\Yes of course. Find us a place to call home, Commander.\\ Kirk quietly followed the Vulcan.

* * * * *

Woodland growth began to take shape in the first gleam of daylight. Tree limbs, wet in the morning dew, hung motionless in the chilly air. Falling drops of water from overhead leaves made sharp sounds in the stillness.

Jim Kirk still slept, wrapped in a Vulcan desert cloak. They had sheltered the night under a rock ledge within a forested plateau that dropped hundreds of feet into another green valley.

Spock had relaxed on the outer edge of sleep, resting, yet attuned to the night. He reclined now, against the rock wall, warmed by his own cloak, watching consciousness return to his Captain.

Hazel eyes searched for him. "Good morning, Spock. Have you slept at all?"

"I am fully rested." He moved, helping a determined patient to sit, leaning him against the wall with a questioning glance.

"I'm sore, but I'm better," grinned the Captain.

Spock hesitated, studying the face of his friend. "You are fevered, your bruises more discoloured, and hurting even to breath. Upon what facts do you base your statement?"

"Mental and moral uplifting of spirit. Today you are here, we're on shore leave, and you care." Still grinning he added, "I'm just stiff; I'll limber up as I move."

"Shore leave." The words hung in the air.

"Exploring unclassified new conditions in planetary geography." Rubbing his arms and neck, Kirk began slow circular motions. "Uhh, it's damp and chilly." Shaking, he gave in to impulse, and burrowed more deeply into the Vulcan cloak, snuggling his face within the hood. At the sound of a phaser, he mentally jumped, emerging as stones became red hot under two cups of coffee.

Black observant eyes watched him shiver. "Your coffee, Jim."

Rubbing his eyes with the palms of his hands, Kirk jumped again as the phaser sang, heating the far wall to a cherry red. Now, he was awake. Warmth spread through them both. Soreness faded somewhat as he moved. Hot coffee warmed them, the supplementary pills gave nourishment without, unfortunately, satisfying hunger. Despite that, the day looked more pleasant.

"Thank you, Spock. Have you been outside yet?"

"Briefly. Jim, there should be more acid in the air than the tricorder shows. We are dropping lower into a trough between mountains, and it seems that Nature has set its own balance. Air currents push from across the canyons, then upward. I believe we will find the lower regions have been untouched by the devastation of the past.

"Man could have survived here during the holocaust, planning on moving back to rebuild his world. This seems a comfortable life. After so many years, what do you suppose prompted them to leave somewhere they knew was safe?"

"Man's need to know?" Kirk suggested. "Perhaps the need to differ, each according to his own dreams and ideals. We have known these.

"The most advanced of the race could have had a shelter here, arranged before the worst of their war happened. They would still have the best of what was left; leaders, scientists, and scholars with a chance to begin again."

"People at war seldom plan on losing. Consider too, this may have been those opposed to war. Either way, it is a possible entrance to a planned settlement. There may even be more than one, and they may still be occupied."

"Yes, there is Wolf to account for."

"Jim, this is a lower plateau, in a series of mountain ranges. It is a good place to begin a search."

"My ears are still popping," observed Kirk.

"It is the pressure of the canyon," Spock assured. A comfortable silence surrounded them as they sipped their second cup of coffee. "Wolf left 22.4 minutes before first light. He will know the valley before he leaves it."

"Wolf is a good companion to camp with and has a good nose for tracking." Shaking his head he spoke softly, "What was an animal like that doing on the slope where he found me? I thought he lived nearby and would take me home with him. Instead he has stayed with me, leading me through the mountain, helping a great deal. But he's so tame, he must belong to someone."

"He has a sixth sense, that recognizes your need."

"Yours too - he brought you to me. And of course home may still be ahead of him." Kirk sat straight, assuming the position of an officer. "We're late contacting Scotty."

"I made contact while you slept. The ship is in orbit. All is well. Jim, when I knew you were hurt, I began searching for formulas through the laws of physics. I have found a black light system that can pierce the barrier in sublight speed to an established counterpoint of reference. This makes beam up possible."

"Black light? Do you mean a negative beam?"

"Negative in that it does not change its molecular structure as it penetrates; but cuts through the positive energy field, neutralizing protons in its path. This leaves a clear space for beaming or communication. The path can be widened by adjusting the central lens in ship's control."

"Great galaxies, Spock! Hundreds of encased planets like this one; thousands of scientists, the Federation, to say nothing of the Vulcan Academy, all looking for solutions. You've discovered the answer in a matter of hours! I'm really proud of you, Spock"

"Thank you, Captain." Dark eyes refused to look up.

"You heard me, too. We have become - joined through our time together, in our own way." There was silence as he sat watching his First Officer, things clicking into place. "Spock, did I talk to Scotty through your new technique?"

"Yes."

"I thought I was going through a planetary satellite. Spock, I really - " He gulped a large breath. "Wha-t?"

The tricorder hummed as Spock checked out a bundle of fur... glowing, especially around the mouth. A pink tongue hung lopsided as it sat down next to Spock. "He's been through a narrow opening into the mountain."

"It was an underground breakfast! Well that takes care of what to feed him. But that greenish yellow lichen sure rubs off."

"Look at the bottom of your boots, Jim."

"Un-huh. Yours, too. It's everywhere isn't it?"

* * * * *

Jim Kirk stood, feet spread apart, surveying the canyon before him. Wolf sniffed the wind for new scents as Spock descended the last of the sheer wall above them. Gathering the woven vines into loops, he secured them to his belt and began to record the new level.

"Spock," Kirk called over the low roar of nearby falls, "birds - way up." As Spock looked up, Kirk continued loudly, "Four foot wing span at least, riding currents near the top. Look at them glide."

Spock checked his tricorder again. They walked toward the roar of the falls, rounding huge predominant boulders. Then both stood entranced. Clear water slid, smooth as silk, over a precipice three hundred feet above them, to fall, bellowing, rolling, boiling into white froth, flinging itself into spray. The wind was strong here. Mist dampened their faces, sleeking black hair, while blond hair plastered itself to Kirk's forehead as drops of water lingered on his cheeks. The Captain studied the river.

«Jim - I came a cautious warning, which brought him back. I predict a rainy day. Indeed, it is already wet outside the mountain range, but that should not come over the heights.» He studied the instrument in his hand. *«I read a large opening behind the falls, but see no ledges to gain a dry entrance. This is the only large opening in the area.»*

«Then let's find a small one. They must all run together sooner or later.»

Spock motioned back the way they had come. They found a narrow entrance almost hidden by fallen rocks. "Stand back," he said. Reluctantly, Kirk obeyed, realising that his bruised body could not effectively assist. Starting at the top, Spock began clearing away the debris. As soon as the opening was large enough, he disappeared inside. *«Climb through slowly, some rocks are still insecure.»*

Kirk followed Wolf, and Spock pulled them to safety, leading them further into the cave. Seating Kirk on a flat rock, Spock turned, heating the wall, spreading wet cloaks to dry.

«I could help you, Spock.»

«Only if you are still,» came the sure reply. "It has been several hours since you rested. Do not argue with logic, stay here. Wolf - protect," rang in their ears as Spock's foot steps faded deeper into the cave, in search of water.

There was silence, then a stray thought crept into Kirk's mind. *«Wolf glows like a green light. Oh boy... I should never have sat down... feel funny, there's not a soft place on this rock. It must... hurt you too. No strength. It can't be dark already.»*

«Your thoughts are unorganized. I have found water and am returning.»

«Ummm...»

Returning, setting the canteen aside, Spock gathered his

slumping friend, cushioning him against Vulcan warmth, comforting, encouraging pleasant memories in healing sleep. Four hours later the dog stirred, going to the entrance. He looked back at the Vulcan, asking permission. It was given. Kirk stirred with a catch of breath; responsibility, the trained need to be alert, memories or hurting, were bringing him back to awareness. Warm Vulcan fingers touched his face, assuring peace. He slept again.

The dog returned as it began to rain.

* * * * *

Cold, wet and beautiful, land without apparent change. Towering snow capped peaks, streaked in black and silver; long sheer drops; rugged crags, pinnacles of spires, monuments of stone, all scattered with cracks and crevices packed with snow.

Kirk stood at the edge of a forest of tall scattered pines, breathing clean crisp air. The quiet woods echoed with small sounds; timber creaking, the occasional plop of water hitting the ground... It was spring, and the new growth of busy plants was just beginning to fill in the spaces between the trees. Small flowering plants would open blossoms with the late morning light. Each turn of his head brought wonder at the splendid scenes. "Spock," he murmured, looking at his friend.

"Indeed." The Vulcan understood. The hum of Spock's tricorder broke the stillness, and the vibration shattered the minute harmony of millions of overhead pine needles, laden with cold round drops of water, which showered down on two unprepared Starfleet officers. Spock's face registered pure shock as his eyebrows rose to peaks of astonishment. He suffered in silence; Kirk gasped at the sudden drenching. He glanced down at his wet clothes; holding his arms away from his body, he looked at a perplexed Spock, who was doing the same thing. He started to grin, and then to laugh till tears spilled down his cheeks.

He leaned against the tree, splattering more drops on his friend. Spock moved away; Kirk sank weakly to a sitting position at the base of the tree, in another burst of giggles.

Wolf had moved quickly from the shower under the trees, remaining mostly dry. He then observed them from a distance. After Spock's departure, he came slowly to where the Human sat laughing against the tree, on wet ground. Eyeing Kirk closely he ventured a sniff to investigate the new behaviour, and got caught in a hug with laughing words and scratches behind the ears. Talking soft accepting words, Kirk sought for eyes in all that fur. Eventually he sought his friend in the warmed cave they had slept in; to dry their clothes, warm themselves and start again.

He found that Spock had made hot drinks for them both. At ease in mind and spirit, tension and strain from long months in space, battle weariness and boredom from border patrols were gone. Spock commented, "It's been a long time since I've heard you laugh like that."

"We lead a busy life," Kirk answered.

* * * * *

Dry again, they moved on. They dropped over five thousand feet in four hours. Small game was becoming more evident. Kirk spotted

several varieties of colourful birds; the animals they came across travelled in small herds, and were preoccupied with their search for food. Wolf checked them out, sniffing an inquiry. They watched him from a short distance, then returned to their browsing.

"You would think they would be a little more curious," mused Kirk.

"There has been no one to hunt them, so they would not be afraid." Spock watched them a moment, admitting, "If they have no enemies, they should have multiplied."

"Then they're coming here from some place else." Interest showed in the Human eyes. "Perhaps this is a feeding ground - a summer pasture. We've passed various caves all the way down; there are other canyons besides the one we are following. Animals are climbing out of the lower valleys."

"We have dropped a considerable distance. This is rich feeding for animals. I would agree, animals do roam for food and water, and return to their mating grounds to reproduce. It is part of their life cycle."

"We can back track, find where they come from," Kirk offered, his eyes beginning to search beyond the meadow.

"It occurs to me that there is an easier way. The cave system. Follow a draught. It should lead us to another valley where there may be people. Meanwhile - " The tricorder hummed. "It is getting dark. And cold. There are three openings to our left in the next three hundred eight point six three feet. The first cave has a temperature of fifty one degrees."

With a sparkle in his eyes, Kirk warmly grinned at his sober Vulcan, patting a warm Vulcan shoulder blade. "Our daylight has left us and your tunnel is too cold for visiting aliens, do you have something dry and warmer, with a good view?"

"Certainly Captain, just follow me," and he marched off, Kirk followed chuckling.

Again they heated the walls, and swallowed pills for nourishment, over the hot Vulcan drink. The Human ventured, "Spock, do you find your body still loaded with energy in the early dusk? Or are you anxious to get started before daybreak?"

"Life here is slow - more relaxing; there is a difference."

"I must be getting better; this morning I felt I could have recorded the whole valley before daybreak. I have too much unoccupied time."

Spock's eyebrows had risen. "Patience is a virtue, and rest is essential for you."

"That, my friend, is an Earth idiom. I'm resting under pressure, but it is made pleasant by your company."

"Perhaps we need a chess board."

"Umrrmm." Kirk sounded interested. "There is no soft wood here to carve, but I have been searching for some sort of dried wood that would carve as well. Do you still have the chess pieces that I

carved on T'Selle?"

"Yes - it was a gift of great value." Silence as he considered. "T'Selle was indeed a turning point for me."

"For me too. We learned to work together. It made us the best team in the fleet, with the best ship and crew. Perhaps we'll find some material that I can carve again." Kirk shifted, moving with difficulty. "It's hard to stay in one position, I get so stiff, and that affects you too. Sorry, Spock."

"I have been careful to leave your body sensations with you, shielding you only from sharp pain and acute discomfort. For your survival you needed to recognize danger or harmful conditions. Yet even now, as you rest, your body needs the freedom to relax, and heal. I can give you this in a full meld."

"Doesn't this present a danger to you as an individual, Spock? I feel as though I have known and accepted every part of your Vulcan ancestry and psychology. When we are together there is no barrier or difference, but you must remain Spock."

"Close your eyes; I will take you to the stars." And he did.

* * * * *

By the time the sky had begun to lighten, the wind in the tunnels had ceased. Walking steadily they cleared the passageway within the hour. Now they stood on one of many precipices overlooking two oval shaped valleys, joined below them by a two hundred foot ravine.

"What do you suppose gave the valleys the kidney shape?" murmured Kirk.

"The huge mountain plateau jutting from the other side."

"Spock!" The Captain, caught off guard, looked his surprise. Grinning and shaking his head at the sober Vulcan, he replied in mock seriousness. "The logical explanation is bubbling cauldrons of hot lava, wind and water within the mountains themselves, through eons of time."

Spock gave his most long suffering look. "Really, Captain."

"Indeed," came the grave reply, with just the right Vulcan tone. It didn't work, as the smile broke through.

Glancing quickly down and to the left, they saw a field of knee high grass stretched across a forlorn valley to sloping walls of grey rock. Large chunks of stone from landslides lay scattered at its base. Sheer slopes rose overhead, disappearing in ledges that promised plateaus with further heights that climbed into snow. "It looks forbidding, no trees or fresh greenery."

"Jim, there is small animal life in the valley on the right. Underground tunnels between here and the lake shelter them."

"Now that lake looks like the ideal place to camp. There's something cooling about a forested background. It looks like home."

Wolf had settled himself at the Captain's feet. He sniffed the air, judging the valley by his own standard of safety and

acceptance. The Captain extended a hand touching his head, absently including the dog, as he discussed their descent with Spock. The dog put up his nose, revelling in the communication, yet standing quietly; no one had ever scratched him like this man did... *this Human...*

* * * * *

Using the woven vines, Spock descended to receive the haltered animal, as the Captain slowly lowered him the last fifty feet. They slowly followed the dog to the lake. By the time the bright light had entered their secluded oasis, they had explored and recorded both valleys.

Small furry animals dived into their tunnels as the men approached. Hoof tracks around the lake announced a larger species. Spock's tricorder hummed. "Small herds of deer-like animals, forty to one hundred and twenty five pounds, according to their age."

Glaring light turned the blond head to golden high-lights; a strong hand shaded eyes that gazed upwards with interest, to spot a small herd climbing the rocky heights.

They stood in saw grass at the edge of the lake. The Human jumped, jerking a cut hand from a strand of sharp edged grass. "Spock," he said with enthusiasm, looking at his bleeding palm, "that's why there are no grazing herds here! This grass is covered with barbs - it would cut their mouths to pieces."

"Indeed." Spock glanced at the hand, removed his back pack, kneeling as he searched for medi-spray.

"Why should it be so coarse?" the Captain wondered, looking at the beauty and quiet around them, as he knelt beside the Vulcan.

Spock paused, medi-spray in hand, glancing toward the ravine indicating the other valley. "Notice the winds are, even now, coming down the slopes and over the rocks at the far end of the other valley. They are pushed across the ravine, and into this valley."

"A wind tunnel?" Kirk offered.

"Yes. I would speculate, the storms within these ranges are self contained, their fierceness reaching through each crevice or cave within itself. It is a natural cooling system." He looked up, dark hair shining black as a raven's wing. "The field of grass survives." Opening the injured hand, he sprayed it. Pausing, still holding the can, he added, "I would further speculate, small life forms; butterflies, moths, other insects surviving the winter as eggs laid at those particular levels to emerge each spring. Each level differs in vegetation, suiting different food requirements."

"Each level has its own life cycle." Kirk mused. "Larger animals simply migrate by season. Spock, could the smaller deer-like herds be domesticated?"

"I think not. They are too small to ride and too fragile to pull a plough."

"But not to eat." Hazel eyes shot up to catch a fleeting Vulcan expression. "I'm sorry, Spock. I wouldn't eat them, but

this race might have."

Wolf came panting through the grass, untouched by its sharpness because of his fur. Kirk took a deep breath; standing, he wiped an arm across his face. "I feel like I'm baking - how about cooling off in that lake?"

Swinging the pack to his back, the Vulcan followed the edge of the water to the forested side. "Jim, when the sun is directly overhead, the energy belt and M zones it passes through increases the heat. If we hurry, we will have 33.6 minutes - " he dropped, pulling off his boots - "before this area begins to cool." Sitting with the other boot in his hand, he glanced up, caught now in his own hybrid emotion of sympathy.

The Captain had stripped to his briefs, exposing a multi-coloured body. Deep purple, crimson soreness faded to blue, green blending to yellow, in alternating abuse from left shoulder to thigh. The discoloured hip that caused such discomfort. Bruised ribs that hampered breathing. Spock closed his eyes in self recrimination. *I am a fool, I could not resist his charm, nor my desire to be here. Forgive me, Bones.*

"Coming?" Kirk smiled, turning to catch the brief unguarded expression of regret. *No words to say or even think - just move, live to the fullest and be glad for times like these.* "Last one in..." He was gone in a clean slicing dive that left no ripples.

It was cold, clean and refreshing. Quickly adjusting, Kirk dived deep, stretching himself, reaching out, his body chilled, yet filled with energy. No boundaries here, freedom to push his own strength, offering from the essence of his being; searching, expanding, using his eyes to probe the depths. He felt the Vulcan's answer as Spock matched his pace. They swam in unison, following the rock walls above the clear white sandy bottom. Satisfied, yet hungry for the next challenge, Kirk twisted, rolling into an upright position, seeking his friend. *\\Always the eternal question, is there nothing more? Is this all there is?* His hands moved with smooth rounded motions, underwater colours, shadows - flickering high-lights in instant moving patterns touching intelligent blond head; and muscles that rippled in arms and shoulders.

Spock, surprised again, lost for an answer, saw only the value of his Human counterpart. Hunger to plunge the depths of this Human element, to know this mind completely - *To bond - to bond!* With positive intent, his hand moved to touch the handsome face.

\\Spock - an under water ledge. With a flash of feet Kirk was gone.

Trembling, Spock pulled himself out of the hypnotic state. *\\Jim, you are reaching the point of no return.* He dived after his friend.

\\Right, came the reply, just as their heads broke the surface within the underground chamber. Lichen coloured the walls with dim green light. Colourful mould showed the tops of ledges. An underwater projection helped them climb to the rocky edge, where they sat catching their breath.

\\Curiosity killed the cat, and it's an irresistible itch. Shall we see where this goes?

\\Why should a cat's curiosity make you itch?

Wet footprints told of their detours and short climbs. Keeping to the left they found an exit just above where they had entered the water. Using tree trunks and various bushes to steady their descent they hurried to don warm clothes.

Wolf, left at the lake, had every intention of diving in with the two men. He had jumped forward, stopping short with two front paws in the icy water, as the cold hit him. Putting his nose down and strangling, he snorted and sneezed; shaking his head he bounded back on the beach. He had seen the last of Spock disappear following the Human. A howl of great despair rent the air, as he hopped and jumped, racing back and forth, barking for their return. He had never been near this much water before. An ache, becoming a great hurt, was breaking over him. His own had gone.

\\Fear not. A flooding assurance. *\\I will protect and return him.* Comforted, he continued to shake, slowly remembering his responsibility. Sniffing the air, closely checking the area for signs of danger, he sat near their clothes to guard, defend, protect - something he didn't understand - but he must be ready, for they would come back.

When the men came shivering down the mountain, Kirk called him. *He is all right!* Joy exploded as the dog met the laughing Human. *Why did the Human say he wished he had my coat?* Watching Spock, he caught the new sparkle in brown eyes and ceasing the cavorting frolic walked to where the Vulcan sat pulling on his socks. *\\Keeper?* he questioned.

\\All is well, safewatch is returned to you. Long slim fingers reached down; assuring, patting and scratching the unreachable itchy back bone. Accepting reward and duty, the warning of 'danger' touched the Vulcan mind; jerking on his boots, grabbing supplies, Spock sent the Human an alarmed mind signal.

* * * * *

The brief day was gone. Chilly air currents circled around them, pushing up the hill to moan over the woods. High up the mountain overhanging cliffs protruded like buffers, channelling the wind back over the woods to circle the lake again.

Dressed now, Kirk struggled into his boots, amazed at the sounds of growing fury surrounding them. "Not here, Spock, it's coming from the other side!" Kirk grabbed the tricorder, and circled the lake to the connecting ravine. A storm overhead was worsening. Light snow, getting heavier, blowing into blizzard density, plunged from higher peaks, flung into space to ride the winds; wild roaring, that frosted the mouths of caves, sealing each crack and crevice in white. *Jigsaw puzzle* was the thought, as cold forbidding blasts iced and laid the field of grass flat.

Kirk stood spellbound; the hair on the back of his neck lifted in straight bristles, leg muscles screamed to move, muscled arms and shoulders pulled as they bunched, aching for action. Goose bumps climbed his spine - still he braced against the scene. His tricorder was forgotten in the challenge of the moment, yet it ran on recording it all.

\\Jzm! Spock's urgent cry broke the spell.

Coming! he screamed, breaking into a run with the demons hell on his heels, racing to Spock's side, through the trees and back to the rocky wall of the center mountain plateau. They entered one of the many caves.

* * * * *

Checking the cave with a glance, Kirk turned back, brushed by the Vulcan and disappeared. Spock, removing his cloak in the center cave, ran back out at the sudden barking. Kirk, with a large stone held against his chest and a slightly smaller one in his other hand, was returning to the cave.

"Captain?" two pairs of eyes demanded.

"A fireplace, Spock, won't it seem more like home? There's several more stones just the right size," Kirk explained.

"I had thought to heat the wall," Spock rationalized.

"This, my friend, is for coffee and company," Kirk grinned. "I'll let you take care of the furnace."

Wind swirled around as Spock gathered stones with a determined stance. *You are not to lift anything heavy. Go and sit down.*

Kirk reappeared, the cold reddening his cheeks. *But this is not heavy.*

Would you have me suffer for your enthusiasm?

No. Kirk followed him silently, watching him place the stones and head back for more. He heard the name 'Wolf' being called amid the roar of the weather. The dog followed Spock into the cave to sit at Kirk's feet. "Coffee coming up, Spock," Kirk called from checking through Spock's neatly packed gear. He stood with a cup in each hand, "I'll get some water," and met a wall of Vulcan opposition. The Vulcan cloak rustled as Spock slid it around Kirk's shoulders. *Yield to me. I require that you mend and recover.* With a shake of his head that said, *I don't believe this,* Kirk handed Spock the cups. Wrapping the cloak more securely, easing Kirk to the ground, Spock heated the walls with his phaser, called, "Wolf, protect," and left.

Spock, really! echoed after him. Sighing, Kirk curled slowly, stiffly, around a soft ball of fur that licked his face. In seconds, soft breathing heralded deep sleep, settling the problem for everyone.

His Captain slept the sleep of the just and deserving. Setting the cups of water aside once more, Spock declined food or drink himself. With a great deal of illogical satisfaction he checked their warmth and comfort. *Well done, sleep now,* echoed as the dog's eyes followed Spock, until they blinked, slowly closing in sleep.

Walking to the cave entrance, Spock listened to the sounds, feeling the chill and foreboding, yet remembering eyes that sought out the mystery. *What do you have that draws him, that stirs a deep response?* he asked the wind. Sheltered, just out of reach, Spock extended his mind. He felt the loneliness of savage fierceness, unleashed in its own depths, and shared in that majesty, freeing his soul as he had in the loneliness of the Vulcan deserts of his

youth. Logic explained, *It is just the elements; nature, responding to planetary cycles, changes of season, matters within its depths causing shifts of plates that pattern surface living conditions.* Yet, his mind continued, *what fascination do you hold for Jim Kirk? Have you waited all these centuries to be discovered like this? Jim, in all creation, the odds of finding that one life that makes me more than I could have been otherwise... Do you understand? Because you loved me, it is a greater bonding.* Long moments passed before he sought the warmth of the inner cave with his two friends.

* * * * *

Kirk stepped around the sleeping Spock, and left the cave in the early dawn, with Wolf following. Wind had lashed the valley and fled; the morning was still. Man and dog tracked both valleys, leaving their prints on snow-covered ground. Kirk looked up, curious, longing for the unexplored. *Two hundred and twenty feet straight up... small ledges and many finger holds, surely an easy climb. I wonder what differences the plateau holds.*

He stood, a black caped, golden haired figure of dignity, silhouetted against the grey. Breathing deeply, he felt the freshness of early morning, day beginning with the smell of wet earth, green grass and pine. He stood near the edge of the plateau, awed by the immensity of the surrounding mountains and crags. He threw back his arms, including the heights and snow peaks scattered with climbing trees, that glistening, sparkling picture of life, far overhead, in another world of light.

Spock knew when they left him, had known they explored the valleys. Going slowly now, not interrupting, he sought them out.

Curiosity surfaced in the Vulcan as he found Kirk. His Human friend stood strong and firm, radiating strength and determination. It was the familiar basis of what Jim was. Yet - now Kirk was yielding. Joy flooded the Human, replenishing, instilling him with peace and acceptance. Vitality and eagerness charged through him with currents of energy. A desire to discover filled him. *Move!* He turned, quickly stepping out of sight.

Words of warning rang in Spock's ears, as he snapped into alertness. *When did Jim Kirk fail to find trouble!* McCoy's words, bringing a feeling of misgiving, causing him to fill the link with concern.

\\Spock? A surprised question with hidden excitement. *\\I think I've found a main entrance of the cave system. It's an excellent observation point.*

\\Jim, the people who lived here were the leaders of a highly developed race. Unmanned defence systems are automatic when triggered. Your estimated chance for survival...

\\Spock... don't even think it. I'll be careful. A head appeared over the edge. "Coming up?" Kirk grinned, lowering a vine.

Spock had haltered the dog and now secured him to the vine, signalling ready. They checked the area with instruments, investigating the mouth of the cave, which proved safe. "This is an excellent area to establish contact with Mr. Scott. It would be pleasant to order breakfast from the Enterprise."

Spock set up the receiving device, explaining the theory as he

worked. "The technical equipment for sending and receiving is aboard the Enterprise. These six points forming a triangle are points of contact for beaming down as well as communication."

Kirk concentrated on the project, understanding, then grinned, hazel eyes filling with admiration, "You're an exceptional scientist Mr. Spock, and we're both hungry." They stepped back giving the marked area a wide berth. "Enterprise. Come in, Enterprise."

"Captain! Are ye all right, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Scott, we're ready to try Spock's beam. Mr. Spock will send you further coordinates. When we have completed the experiments, please stand by. Kirk out."

The process began. Kirk watched large and small articles appear and disappear. Even lab rats lived through the transport.

"Mr. Scott." The quiet Vulcan voice filtered through the transporter room. "We've transferred everything we had discussed, except nourishment and items for our personnel comfort. We need two breakfasts, with an extra double order of keltz."

"Keltz, Mr. Spock?" slipped out in surprise.

"Affirmative," came the deep serious reply, amid the sound of Kirk's laughter. With a raised eyebrow and dignified status, he asked, "Is Dr. McCoy aboard?"

"Standing by, sir." Scott yielded with a nod toward McCoy.

"Spock - where's Jim?"

"Right here, Bones. We've progressed some eight miles through the mountains. I'm all right, we're camping, relaxing, yet working too. Just what you would order, so don't worry. We may have found an entrance to their civilization. No sense in scaring anyone with our unkempt appearance, so we need fresh supplies, clean clothes and a shave... and I need two and a half inches smaller in the waist please."

"Not after you eat Scotty's breakfast," McCoy fussed. "Jim - be careful."

"Of course, Bones, but there's nothing shown up to hurt us so far. Kirk out."

But McCoy couldn't let it go, and shouted the one word that held faith and challenge. "Spock!"

"Understood, Doctor," came the short acceptance.

"Supplies on the way, gentlemen," announced Scott. "Captain?"

"Scotty," grinned the Captain, "it's often the spirit of the thing that counts. Thanks for your needed help. Kirk out."

* * * * *

Scott looked at McCoy. "He's lost those few inches you wanted, Leonard."

McCoy blinked, "He's been hurt, I know he has. When I get hold

of him..." McCoy walked off.

The conversation from the transporter had been heard on the bridge. "I wouldn't want to be in the Captain's boots when he comes back on board," commented Sulu quietly.

"If he has been hurt, McCoy will be too busy fussing to bully him," reasoned Chekov.

"Nae, gentlemen," said Scott, as he returned to the bridge in time to catch the last part of the conversation. "The Captain will not be back until he finishes what he set out to do."

"You've all forgotten, the Captain's with Mr. Spock on a shore leave they both need. He can't be badly hurt, or Spock'd never let him stay down there. What would you do?" finished Uhura.

* * * * *

The softened bites of high protein stew called keltz appealed to Wolf. He sat beside the men munching each bite. Kirk was finishing his coffee as the dog pushed his nose against his arm. Kirk put an arm around him with pats of affection. Wolf revelled in the companionship, looking toward Spock, who almost smiled in understanding. When Kirk released him, the dog faced the Vulcan awaiting the slender hand of acknowledgement and permission to leave. *Go, but stay near by.*

"Your understanding with Wolf is leaking through, Spock. He shows that he hears you too." Kirk smiled, stacking dishes within the triangle, along with their soiled clothes, for beam up and recycling.

The valley had lightened, but it was still early morning as they carefully checked and went through a new cave entrance. They followed green covered walls once more, eventually reaching an opening in the side of a dry rock gully. Daylight broke through, showing that the new find was a desolate place.

Turning back, they retraced their steps, finding new tunnels, exploring and discovering edible forms of fungus. Wolf ran ahead of them, leading, back tracking to them, barking softly if they lingered too long. Two normally responsible leaders, spelunking, enjoyed themselves as they recorded their passage. Finally they returned to the exit by which they had entered the caves. The dog led them out into their own valley.

"Jim, there are eighteen point two minutes before the winds begin again. There is not enough time to linger."

"Too dangerous to swim," Kirk agreed, "but I'd like a quick walk in the open with Wolf. We'll be with you in ten minutes."

Spock nodded, heading for the cave where their gear was stored, gathering odd pieces of wood as he went.

Kirk turned back to the lake. Coming through the trees, he became jittery as his own alarm system went off. *Where was Wolf?* Stopping short, he stepped cautiously behind a large tree, watching a small boy who stood perhaps quarter of a mile away, wondering where the child had come from.

The boys looked terrified; he glanced over his shoulder, then

began to run around the lake toward the caves. He was fast for one so small, and soon out of sight. The area was deserted again.

But not for long. Two men in short, light coloured garments, with arm length black capes, ran from the woods. They stopped short as they saw the lake, then with a terse comment exchanged, they began to run around it.

\\Spock - two men. Chasing a small boy, headed for the ravine!
He paused as the dog came bounding down the mountain, racing for Kirk, who caught him, pulling him behind some trees. *\\Spock, there's no place to hide there - he'll be caught.*

He broke cover, racing for the cave area, where a small boy stood petrified, facing a stranger. As Kirk ran up, the small face became white with shock; he gasped, turned as if to run on, and collapsed. Spock moved, gathering the child in his arms, and turned back to the cave.

\\Spock, the winds are beginning. Running ahead, Kirk heated the cave walls, creating a livable place.

In their shelter, Spock touched the young head, lingering, watching the child's face. "His family are High Herdsman from the city of Ur. They were taking the condras to higher pasture when they were attacked by the Condralos." He looked up at his Captain, "Condras are cattle, and Condralos are - "

"Cattle thieves," Kirk finished.

"The thieves attacked his people. He saw his uncle fall before he, himself, escaped in the dust made by the stampeding cattle. These valleys are his home. It is part of the legend of his race that when the sky fell, his grandfathers fled here to safety. They were scientists, creating pressure zones to stabilize their environment. Then they grew and developed the fungi and different varieties of food, through cross breeding. By seeding the passage ways, they ensured survival. Their people have built a city in the volcanic area, using that energy and heat to exist. They are an advanced race."

"Then there's a city further underground?"

"Yes; we are still in the higher mountains. Through certain years of their youth, they earn the title 'High Herdsman' as they travel with designated leaders. They bring the cattle from the warmer low valleys, setting them free to graze and mate throughout the summer. The cattle will return with them as the heights become cooler, and their food supply diminishes."

"And the Condralos?"

"They are an unknown factor, as they are not part of his people. It has been discussed, and considered a possibility, that others escaped the holocaust and live in other valleys. There has been no contact with them, beyond a brief attack by them last spring. The older herdsman last year was killed as the herd stampeded. The two young herd boys hid and fled back home."

"Spock." Kirk paused, thinking. "Today they were not after cattle, and that changes the crime. Could this have been a kidnapping?"

"That is a possibility. But why?"

"They were definitely chasing the boy." Kneeling beside him, Kirk brushed back dark curls, revealing a small pointed ear. "He has the characteristic make-up of Adronis, with a reflection of Vulcan heredity."

"Vulcan curiosity and control is a factor. I have not probed into his personal experiences; however, honesty is the basis of his race's philosophy. His name is Svon. He has had nine years of training in his society."

The Captain heated the water that was now easily available for hot coffee. "Spock, you only touched his face briefly, yet you received an understanding of his history?"

"Jim, he is not deeply unconscious. Exhaustion, fatigue and fear sent him into shock. He has been running steadily since yesterday morning. He's hungry, although he has eaten lichen from the cave walls. He simply sleeps and rebuilds his energy. His mind is as readable as a book."

"Yellow lichen, by the look of his fingers and mouth," commented Kirk. "He should have been... more on some sort of mental guard, I suppose. Still, he's very young."

"His mind is orderly, and he has telepathic abilities. I have left a message there that his pursuers are gone and he is with friends."

The Captain sat leaning against the wall. As he sipped his drink, he reasoned, "If these various people have never met - there must be obstacles they cannot cross, barriers that keep them in their own territory."

"Yet the Condralos are here," came the quick reply. "We need more information. Rest now, Captain. I will stand first watch."

Kirk pulled the black desert cloak across him and over the boy. As Spock rose, the dog settled on the boy's other side, ensuring warmth. *\\Spock, wake me if Svon comes to before my watch.*

\\Yes Captain. Sleep now.

* * * * *

Some hours later, Spock felt dark eyes upon his back and turned calmly from the mouth of the cave, giving the Vulcan hand greeting. The boy had not moved; now he merely watched as the Vulcan approached and touched his face. *\\I am Commander Spock. The man who sleeps beside you is my Captain. We are on a mission to bring a message to your people. We entered your valley four days ago, walking your highlands to arrive here, and witnessed your flight. Your pursuers have either fled into the caverns for safety or perished in the storm. You are safe within a double cave. Rest again; renew yourself; then we will return you to your people.*

The dark eyes accepted, then questioned as they studied Spock's face. A small arm reached out in imitation. Palm touching a warm Vulcan cheek, fingers reaching toward the temple.

Spock's hand had dropped yet he allowed the lesson to continue. Curiosity, wonder and acceptance touched him. *\\Are you a*

Klaman, and will you help me?

"I am a Commander, searching for your people. Yet I have many duties. What do you ask of me?"

"Teach me how I should go. My father and perhaps, now, my uncle are dead. I have no guide."

"My time with you is short. Stay by my side until I instruct you differently."

"Yes, Klaman."

Kirk woke as a young head touched his arm. Quickly understanding, he adjusted his arm, encircling the youngster. Their eyes met, acknowledging the offer of comfort. Svon closed his eyes. His own father had been gone for four years; no-one had cared to hold him for such a long time. He listened to the heart beat. It was in the wrong place, and far too slow! Eyes popped open to gaze at the Captain's face. He had no ears! Well, he had, but they were so small - and his hair held the gold light in waves. Svon swallowed hard and closed his eyes again. Gradually he calmed himself, and realized there was pleasure emanating from the Captain, with protection and caring *and it is because of me*. He began to search and found the sense of protectiveness radiated from both men. He relaxed. No-one would catch him now.

"Spock, it's my watch."

"Be still, Captain. You have a greater duty."

"Understood."

* * * * *

Two dark haired men in knee boots stood at a cave entrance by the lake. Their black capes were pulled tight around them against the chilly dampness. They were startled, frankly staring at the water. On guard again they dropped to a crouch, and fled to the safety of the trees, to stare again. They had never before seen a lake. Wet - everything here was wet! Snow lay in thin patches or fell on them from overhead branches. Shivering, they moved stealthily around the lake, discovering the ravine, and advancing to gaze into the next bleak valley. Slowly they entered. Walking on, they eventually found the splashes of colour in the snow that marked where their friends lay. In silence they covered the bodies of both men with stones.

"Teu, there is no child."

"It is well. He may still live." They shook their cloaks, as if to ward off the spirits, and fled back the way they had come.

* * * * *

Spock had watched and waited quietly from his side of the lake. He had been waiting for this search party since the storm ceased.

Three pairs of eyes watched him. "Captain, they have buried their men and left." Turning his attention to Svon, Spock asked, "Svon, do your people know of the Condralos' attack?"

"Yes, Klamman, they knew at once."

"You are linked with your people," Jim Kirk said in excitement. "Then they know you are safe with us?"

"I-it i-is s-so," stammered the lad as he watched first his feet and then the Captain's, not able to lift his eyes.

Kirk halted his rapid thinking. Catching the shyness he glanced quickly at Spock, then knelt, coming to eye level with the boy. "Svon, it is my wish to keep you well and safe. Are we not friends?"

Two dark eyes covered by long lashes became pools of admiration, as a small hand rose giving the Vulcan sign of greeting. The Captain solemnly met it in like fashion, then smiled. "Thank you, Svon." He paused and then asked, "Are we far from your people?"

"No, they are on the slopes now, but they will not be here in time. The Condralos will be gone, and they will not be able to follow them through the fire depths."

"Fire depths?"

"The caves where they come from sometimes fill with fire."

"Then for this reason we must hurry. You must help us, for we cannot take Wolf into the fire depths. Will you be responsible for him until our return?"

"Yes," the boy answered in deep seriousness. Then he glanced at the dog, and said, "Wolf." The dog stood and came to him.

"Thank you, Svon." Turning, he said. "Mr. Spock?"

Silently Spock handed over the communicator. Kirk had noted the stone arrangement and stepped forward to it. "Enterprise."

"Aye, Captain."

"Report, Mr. Scott."

"We're station keeping and set on your co-ordinates, sir. All is well here."

Breathing a sigh of relief, Kirk stated, "Scotty, we've discovered two highly intelligent races. High Herdsman are a noble race, similar to Vulcans; the others are less ethical. We are travelling in the direction of the volcanic region through underground tunnels. We will contact you every hour. Kirk out."

* * * * *

They spent the next two point zero three hours trailing the Condralos. Finally Spock signalled, motioning a halt. *\\Captain, they have met the rest of their party in this cavern, and have gone down the left tunnel at a running pace.* Quickly Spock knelt, patting the dog in slow soothing pats. *\\Be faithful; keep the boy safe until our return.* With a quick lick of Spock's hand, the dog stood waiting. Spock turned to the boy. "Go back now with speed and safety." Not liking being left behind, but accepting it, the boy clicked his tongue to the dog and the two retreated.

The men turned to their own path. The air had become stuffy as they entered the lower regions, growing heavier with acids, sulphur and fumes. Spock's tricorder hummed again, checking the oxygen count.

With perspiration heavy on his face, the Captain asked, "Am I still breathing, Spock?"

"With difficulty, Captain." Before he could give a percentage report, Kirk brushed by him, entering the back of a small cave whose mouth opened into another realm. Acid fumes from hot lava and brimstone filled Kirk's nostrils, coating his lips, until the very taste of vileness was in his mouth. He fought not to cough, blinking back tears; jaw muscles hardened, accepting the burning sensation.

The two men stood on the brink of an abyss, looking down on the pits of hell. Huge pinnacles of jagged rock thrust themselves from the blackness. White fires roared from hidden pockets. The top dome of the cavern was shadowed, glistening in shades of orange as it reflected the explosions and upheaval beneath it. Smoke rose in billows or escaped in wavery lines from new breaks in the crust. A near explosion rent the chamber, sending the two men flat on the floor of the cave. The air became filled with electric energy.

\\Hell's fire slipped through the link.

Spock's eyes searched everywhere, looking for a possible escape route for those they followed. Roaring noise filled the air, assaulting their ear drums, driving clear thought from Kirk's mind. With a shake of his head, Kirk lowered his hands, bringing himself back mentally. Realizing Spock's search, he assured, *\\Spock, they've only just left the area, there's got to be a hidden exit.*

They both searched quickly. Kirk, finding nothing below, placed his hand on Spock's shoulder for balance and leaned out, craning his neck to look upward. Quickly he ran a hand along the top outside edge of the cave. Finding deep gouges, he grasped with both hands, and with an effort scrambled up into the chamber above them. Twisting around, he reached down to help Spock, who quickly followed without needing the assistance.

Kirk glanced back, seeing the earth change. Red lava, pushing itself up, turned yellow, rolling and spitting over and over, and rising up the shaft as if in a boiling pot. The stench of sulphur was incredible.

\\Follow me, filled his mind. Kirk followed the thought, sure knowledge telling him where to put his feet in the darkness, and which way to go.

Spock ran, following his own sense of intuition and an awareness now of others ahead of them. *\\Turn left, Jim.*

\\We're angling back the way we came! They ran on. Spock broke out of the darkness, onto a ledge that angled down through a deep crevice. A man was just climbing out of the far bend, into a high tunnelled entrance. Quickly turning, Spock caught the Captain, pushing him against the wall, mostly holding him up as well as reporting, *\\Jim - a natural crevice, drainage for the overflow of boiling lava... *

\\Run - just run, Spock!!

They ran - Spock turning with hands cupped, to receive Kirk's foot and throw him upward to safety. Kirk rolled over on his stomach, catching Spock's hands as he jumped, helping him pull himself clear of the ledge.

Heat, dehydration, and supreme effort had taxed the Human's endurance as Spock turned, pulling him up another rise in the tunnel floor. Then realising that Kirk was exhausted, Spock threw the Captain over his shoulders, and began a lengthy run, away from the roar of the lava flowing through the fault.

It grew perceptibly cooler. Halting, Spock listened. He'd slowed his pace twice, as the men in front of him slowed theirs. Distant footsteps and the occasional murmur of voices pinpointed their fading position. Finding his stones, he dropped them in a triangle around him. Cradling the Captain, he flipped open the communicator with difficulty. Signalling the Enterprise he gave their new position, and a brief report.

"Are you all right sir?" Scott said in alarm.

"Yes, Mr. Scott. Spock out."

* * * * *

Kirk breathed the smell of green earth and felt the coolness of night on the mountain side. He shivered, remembering, as he sat up. Before his eyes could focus, he felt the warmth of Spock's assurance again. A cool cup of water was placed in his hands. Mental touching checked him, as a calm voice brought him up to date. He was given pills - *Food supplements?*

Yes, swallow them now please.

His curiosity was beginning to arouse him completely, when the Vulcan cloak was wrapped more tightly around him, and he was eased back down. *It's my watch, Spock.*

Not yet my friend, came the answer, as peaceful scenes from the planet Vulcan came into view. Exhausted, the Captain agreed not to disagree, and as he relaxed, lost control, an explanation had started to materialize. Answers to questions, an idea that drifted away... something he'd have to reason with later.

* * * * *

Voices. The Vulcan had been listening to voices for some time now. He sat by his Captain, leaning back against large rocks. Two men had climbed the hill, discussing their problems. His translator had picked up the new valley's language inflections, translating them into standard and recording them. Using his special understanding, Spock absorbed the gist of the content. Sentences of no significant meaning sorted themselves and registered in his mind.

Riate must be a city - or, more probably, a village. Tal'merk lived with his mother there, and apparently made many decisions for her, as she seemed to be of unsound mind. He despaired of the pressure, although he did much for her well being and contented state of mind. Tomorrow, he would escort her to his sister Te'las, for an evening meal with Te'las, her husband and four daughters.

Sh'mi, the companion he spoke to, sympathized, but had little

free time because of obligations to his father. He had achieved high marks in a training - school? That would please his family, but he had failed to attain his own personal goal in Rucp'k.

Becoming involved in the events, Spock was uncertain of Rucp'k. *\\Explain Rucp'k* hung in the air - and the boy did. It was the field of medical science. *\\Ahhh - science.* Spock's interest peaked. Sh'mi had taken an interest in why sickness seemed to increase in the outer perimeters in the warmer months. Disease seemed to strike one home or another, affecting whole villages, causing several deaths. Spock, silently reviewed scientific data and formulas for isolating, destroying by chemical, disinfectant, antiseptics, sterilization or... Then Kirk's warm thoughts spread themselves into the night around them. *\\Boil the water.*

"Boil the water?" said Sh'mi. "Tal'merk, why should I boil the water?"

"I don't know Sh'mi, why should you?"

\\The water is infested with microscopic animals that cause disease and death, but they can not live in boiling water, came Kirk's answer.

"Because the water is infested with microscopic animals that cause disease and death, they can not live in boiling water." answered Sh'mi. "Tal'merk! - Microsp-pec?"

By this time Spock had shut down his link to Kirk, so the Human slept on peacefully, never having actually awakened. However the fat was in the fire. With a startled look of disaster, Spock replied in the only language possible. *\\Microscopic life forms cannot be seen with the eyes. They grow in water that does not move, but stands still in areas that are continually warm, on top of the ground.*

"Life forms - tiny animals that live in warm water! Tal'merk, the people who live near the Du'sm, drink the low water there, so do their animals. I must talk to Ch'ei K'phem now. Come with me!" and he began to pull his friend along, explaining as they hurried down the hill."

Spock blinked in the darkness, turning his eyes to his sleeping companion in amazement. Through his link with Spock the Human had heard the conversation and problems just as he had, and answered, as Jim, not realizing the situation, would. *Jim has a great mental strength. His own thoughts are woven around and through my own. He shares my mind as part of myself. Yet - I must not claim his mind until he offers it. After some moments of thought the question was settled. It is enough - I am content.*

* * * * *

"Spock, molten lava has to run somewhere, and it doesn't go into the green valleys that we've been through." Spock paused, raising both eyebrows. Kirk went on as his ideas fell into place. "Even if the planet is porous, and filled with tunnels, the area around the volcano is not. It was solid, and the channel we ran down - " He paused.

"Was part of the drainage system," continued Spock.

"The volcanic core has advanced to a well developed stage," murmured Kirk. "Either the overflow tunnels are natural drainage

routes, developed over eons of time, or the well planned methods of the first scientists."

Spock sat with his palms together, the calmness of all Vulcan in his face and stature. He inhaled deeply, realising how far the accomplishments of these people had gone.

"They must use the energy from the volcano over a planned duration, then channel it back to the magma chamber as it cools," explained Spock.

"The technology needed to accomplish that..." Kirk said, awe in his voice.

Spock began to sketch in the sand with his fingers. "Captain, the gravity forces in these valleys are very strange, with high fields of magnetism. The great depths must play an important part in creating the M zones that maintain the stability to support life."

"One of the greatest factors is the wind forces; or the volcano?"

"I suspect both. As an analogy - it is a proven fact of the early twentieth century, protons sent travelling in a clockwise circle, at the speed of light, over a four point two mile span, will climb in velocity. When anti protons are sent at the same speed, counter clockwise, collision of the two elements creates immeasurable power. I suggest this is being used here. Also the minute pieces of debris from these explosions are called quarks. I have found an increasing amount of quark residue in the energy readings. It would be sufficient to run a metropolis.

"Furthermore, the volcano we witnessed is totally underground. It has not broken through the surface, and is not likely to do so, as long as its energies are controlled."

"Absolute genius, Spock; a furnace of enormous proportions."

After a brief silence for thought, Kirk continued. "There must be other systems, or no one would have escaped by that crevice we slid down. Besides, it wasn't that hot."

"I have insufficient data to form a hypothesis. However, I would surmise various tributaries being used in a timed, controlled rotation, as energy would be needed in various areas, not necessarily close together.

"That suggests something circular, with the volcano as its centre."

Spock indicated the sketch he had drawn, "See here, and here. In an eighteen hour cycle, 78,642,903,021.4962 metric tons, circulating steadily, would yield total power to their facilities."

Kirk considered that for a moment, awed. Then he turned his attention to something he could understand. "Shall we take a look at the new valley?" He began a quick clean up, repacking their gear.

Spock finished his drink. "They are a highly intelligent race. They will soon detect the presence of strangers here, and come after us."

Ready now, Kirk rose, asking, "How much time do you think we have?"

Rising too, and listening quietly, Spock said, "None."

With a look of alarm, Kirk scattered Spock's design. They ducked behind large boulders, easily spotting the natives emerging from a cave some hundred feet to their left.

* * * * *

Spock drew mind shields around their bond. *Remember they can sense us. This way, Captain.* Spock slipped between rocks and boulders, winding his way along the slope, climbing where possible. The Captain quietly followed, to end up on his belly beside Spock, well hidden, waiting for one race to discover another.

How did they find us so soon?

Remember they are telepathic, and extremely curious. We are new life too. We began at the far side of their domain, passing through it, encountering the attempts made by still another life form to contact them, and followed them -

Home.

Followed them through their own survival systems, in front of sure destruction. The timing for us was extremely close. We would have been as shadows in their reality, not interfering - yet leaving a message.

Svon?

Yes, the boy is a mental record of their achievements, and ours.

He called you Klamam.

It means guardian, leader, a teacher, one who is a guide to shape his life by.

It is a Human trait to wish to reproduce and instill our image in our offspring. The description he asked for, is also that of a father. Will you be able to help him?

There is only one of each of us, and that is enough. It is all that is needed. Therefore we do the best that we can to instill the greatest values that we have to offer.

Yes, Mr. Spock. Taking his eyes off the valley to look at his friend's shadowed growth of beard, he added, "They've gone." He rolled out dusting himself off. *Spock, how come you never get dirty?*

I do not roll.

Vulcans do not attract disorder, Kirk agreed, *but you do have a Human side, and once in a while - cripes! I've ripped another shirt.*

The almost smile lingered briefly, continuing in dark eyes as Kirk looked up in disgust. He read the glint of 'the Vulcan predicting the Captain' look, and realised he had automatically

straightened to military attention, as he frantically sought for anything appropriate to say. Spock answered the formality with his own. *«Captain, you were created to lead; be thankful you enjoy it.»*

The Captain took a deep breath and let it go. Yes, he was very well understood. *«Thank you Spock. I realise I should have explained something that has been bothering you. The only thing you have denied is your emotions, but if you will look back to your fourteenth summer, you will realise - Mr. Spock, Tal'merk was a teenager.»*

Kirk smiled, watching his friend's face, the sudden blink of surprise, then understanding, and the old expression to cover it all. *«Really.»*

«Relax, Spock, the Federation still stands.» Then his expression sobered. *«These people are a segment of the Vulcan race, but they did not have Vulcan history, or, apparently, Surak. They have your basic heredity and constitution, yet they haven't denied emotions, at least not fully.»*

They retraced their steps. Kirk turned off, following along the base of the heights. A new area opened, with scattered rocks in a clearing. They had come quietly, and now to their surprise faced a scene of a blond ball of fur, bristling with rage and sharp teeth, shielding a Vulcanoid boy, who was slowly backing away. They faced a roaring mountain cat.

The Captain yelled, racing to the right, Spock scattered his special stones in a near design: the boy and dog came to him as he commanded them.

Kirk's phaser was in his hand, but he hesitated; the cat was old, but the skin on the underside of her belly hung in folds. She was a mother, a nursing mother. He shouldn't shoot. He watched the six inch fangs and laid back ears, the half crouch, as he side stepped back to Spock. The cat roared and threatened, tail switching, in fury, but she held her position. "Wolf, here! Spock, go!" The dog came to him and they faced the cat together. They had to try the untested system.

"Energize." There was the sparkle of dissolvment. The cat blinked, roaring again, throwing herself at Kirk and his snarling dog. Kirk side-stepped, pulling Wolf into the circle as Scott energized again, bringing them back to their own world.

Kirk materialized, watching Spock and the wide eyed Svon, with a satisfied Scotsman standing behind the control panel. He stepped off the platform, going down on one knee to answer a shaky Vulcan greeting with one hand, while the other rested on Wolf's back. Svon inched closer, drawn like a magnet. The Captain's smile settled the matter as his outstretched arm ended in a hug.

The dog went to Spock. *«Well done»* came the thought, and slender fingers gave special pats.

"Welcome to our home, Svon. We'll get cleaned up and have something to eat together. I have a few duties that I must attend to before I join you and Commander Spock." Releasing the boy, he stood looking toward Scott, noticing bodies that were not there.

"Mr. Scott, this is our new friend Svon, and Wolf. Thank you for your prompt beaming action."

"Welcome aboard, Captain," Scotty grinned, silently looking Kirk over, and answering the understood question. "Dr. McCoy has gone planetside, for a diplomatic luncheon with Mr. R'yce and the government officials. He'll be gone for several hours, until he is able to excuse himself."

"You should have gone with him, Mr. Scott."

"Nae, I am far too busy here."

"Conditions, Mr. Scott?"

"All is well, Captain. We've been awaiting word from you."

"For the moment, we're here. Scotty, will you notify and make arrangements for yourself and the bridge crew to join us for lunch in the officer's lounge in thirty minutes. Please ask Uhura to bring her musical instrument, and we'll have a small party."

"Aye, and thank you, Captain."

* * * * *

The atmosphere was relaxed, Kirk sat with one hand scratching Wolf's head, as he listened to Uhura's voice, watched Spock's slender fingers bring music from the instrument.

The boy's gazed at the Vulcan with worshipping eyes. He was fascinated with Uhura, understanding the words to the music through the translator. He sat now, dark eyes showing his delight with the Human aspect, absorbing the gladness of these others who rejoiced at their returning.

Kirk knew his ship and these officers closest to him, he had sent the message of Vulcan ancestry. Telepathy in Svon should have been assumed, and governing their thoughts expected. However, nothing was more explicit now than Svon's looks of curiosity, and his shyness in covering it. The Captain had watched, finally asking the youth softly, "Do you have a question, Svon?"

It was as if his Klamen had acknowledged him. He studied the Captain's face in seriousness, as well as his offer to help once again. He didn't know how to ask. Something electric passed between and was recorded with openness in their thoughts. *Great value, not to be lost, something of honour, held dear.*

Scott, especially alert and watchful, picked up on the charge and its silent appraisal. He witnessed the dog's reaction, as he too studied James Kirk. Even the Vulcan had blinked his eyes and now was attuned, to learning something Human with his elevated mind.

The Captain opened an arm; Svon slipped off his chair, coming to stand within it. "You are sensing the Human concern for another. Commander Spock," Kirk's eyes briefly found the Vulcan's, "and I have been gone these last few days, living in your valley. Because the story of your grandfathers, and the time they came to live in the mountains, is a true story, the people we left behind, worried that we were hurt. Relief is a Human emotion each of us experiences when others are well and safe." He glanced briefly around the table ending with Mr. Spock. "It is called love for your fellow man."

The Captain gave him a pat on the shoulder. "Are things more

understandable to you now?"

He nodded in agreement, watching the Captain's face. This Human smelt clean, like the woods with the tiny white flowers. They all seemed to have their own pleasant smells - the lady smelt like roses. He could identify them now by scent, when he thought about it briefly; yes, the engineer smelt spicy.

Without removing his arm, Kirk said, in his quiet commanding voice, "Mr. Spock, will you please turn on the view screen and explain Svon's world - and ours - to him." Svon stood with both hands around the padded steel arms of the Captain's chair, absorbing everything he could see and hear.

In the dimmed light, Spock briefly showed Adronis, explaining its history on screen. In the semi-dark aftermath, Spock brought into play the use of holographs of the Enterprise. Her majestic lines and the beauty of her strength and design, caught their breaths, as pride and love of their lady came to the fore. She floated above the large rectangular table; a mirage; straightening back bones, pulling back shoulders, as respect brought up chins. Spock's quiet monotone went on explaining their home. Chekov glanced at Sulu, who grinned as they both felt the same. Kirk was smiling, his eyes glistening with admiration, for this was his lady. He felt the shiver begin in Svon's back bone and go through his body, and answered with the protective strength of his arm.

When Spock had finished, the mirage was gone, light filtered around them again. The boy still stood in a dream, his eyes alight with fire and interest. Goose bumps raced over him, leaving him a-tremble. For in those moments he'd held something he'd never let go of again. The Captain felt it, because he held him and understood. Spock felt it in the timbre of his bones, across the room, and knew he'd been correct in his decision. Yes, the boy had asked, and he would help him.

* * * * *

The synthesizer programmed the jet black soft folds of Vulcan dress cloaks. Kirk gave a look of approval at Spock's impressive tall form. His eyes smiled at Spock's small companion standing quietly in his own dignity. He pinned the gold Star Fleet emblem in place, turning to his waiting companions.

The bridge crew had assembled to see them off, coming to attention as they entered the transporter room. "At ease, gentlemen," the Captain said, and proceeded to the platform with Wolf.

*\\Captain - *

\\Spock, you and Svon are in need of an escort. I have Wolf, and you have a greater duty. He glanced at the two Vulcans. The thought slipped through with a twinkle in Kirk's eyes in spite of himself. *\\Besides, it's my turn.*

\\Understood, went with a quiet sigh.

"Captain," Scott said in alarm, "there are two life forms in the receiving station."

"They must not move the stones. If they're in position, beam them up."

"Aye, Captain." A tall man standing at parade rest, with another in squatting position, materialized, to come to their senses with eyes focussed on a group of stranger, most of whom looked oddly alien.

"Welcome aboard, gentlemen." The Captain spoke softly. "This is the starship Enterprise. I am Captain James Kirk. My first officer, Commander Spock; and Svon, Lt. Uhura, Lt. Sulu, Lt. Chekov and Commander Scott, our engineer, is at the control panel.

After a brief moment of fluster, the calm welcome of the Humans reassured them. Vulcan minds adjusted quickly, and protocol asserted itself. "I am Lu'tk and this is S'kal. We are scientists of the first level, at the moment on patrol watch."

"Well, you've found us. Please consider that we have not been avoiding you, in your future actions. Indeed, we were attempting to return to your valleys with Svon. This was not possible as you were standing in our relay station. We may need your help. There are six stones, with the required properties to receive a neutralizing beam through your lethal planetary rays, that makes beaming people or goods to the planet possible. This works both ways, as you can see, you are now on the ship. The stones must not be moved, as they shape the platform. We were afraid that you might accidentally move them, so brought you here. Now we will send you back."

"May I speak?" said S'kal, getting everyone's attention. "May we return here?" he questioned eagerly.

"I believe we can arrange that," smiled the Captain, watching them acknowledge his answer, and step back on the platform. "Stand in the circles please. Energize, Scotty."

"Captain," said Spock. "In all scientific data, it is the different that is sought, the new, the unexpected. It is you that excited the need to know. You will open them to knowledge of their own world, and eventually the way to the very stars themselves. They have realized this in part, so now we have another problem. You are the difference - a high intelligence, apparently impregnable to the greatest forces of heat and wind that they know, just out of their reach, elusive, yet leading them to understanding."

Kirk sighed, stepping from the beaming pad, facing Spock who wasn't through with him yet.

"Who are you? How does intelligence with such slow body rhythm exist? What are the tolerances and susceptibilities of 98.6 degrees?"

"Mr. Spock - " Kirk began.

"They are telepaths. Intelligence is understood through the mind touch." *How much protection could I give you from the ship? Will the shield I have around our light meld fade with distance?*

"Captain, you'd be a guinea pig!" exclaimed Scotty.

Starfleet classified information; Jim, your deep personal thoughts and experiences.

Kirk put up his hands, as if to hold back all the objections. "Svon, these are your people, they will want you back safely. Come - go to them with Wolf. Commander Spock and I will follow."

"Captain," said Sulu as the two dissolved, "a security team is a good defence, sir."

Chekov quickly added, "We could make an outstanding impression too, Keptain."

"Gentlemen, how could Security stop them reading my mind, or their own? Only another Vulcan could make sure of that," he murmured, moving to stand beside Spock. "Energize."

They materialized facing representatives from both cultures of the same race. Spock stepped forward to stand slightly ahead of his Captain. He gave the Vulcan sign of greeting, then with the voice and authority of all Vulcan, he announced himself.

"I am Spock, direct descendant of Surak, Father of Peace in the survival of Vulcan life. I do claim brotherhood with the inhabitants of Adronis."

He opened the palm of his hand, indicating his companion; "S'Jms S'Krk, a model of the spirit of excellence; I stand beside him in brotherhood, upholding his value. Legend holds his name in honour. He stands within my shield."

The Captain stood straight, somewhat surprised, but holding attention. "Gentlemen, this is your world; the planet Adronis. Many years ago, your continents went to war against one another. As advanced as they were, they still had not developed clean artillery. A clean missile will destroy a given site, which will be occupied the next day by other forces. The nuclear missiles used left a devastating residue. It took many centuries for the natural laws of the planet to clean up much of the surface. Certainly the ozone layer of class M planets, that acts as a shield against the ultra violet rays of the sun, has still not returned. You've overcome your need for it, however, and learned to survive in the pocketed mountain valleys, which have a zone of pressure that assures your safety.

"The lower end of this continent stretches over several thousand miles to the south. It is hot and dry there, with few rivers and little surface water. Moisture in the air is limited, therefore pollutants that come with moisture are also limited.

"Your people there have moved from underground to the deserts, building cities, putting the moving energy that surrounds your world to use. Their homes are above ground and they have new techniques in raising food. They have also devised a means of communication using the kinetic energy around your planet, using that energy to draw our attention from space.

"Gentlemen." The Captain nodded, including all the people in the clearing. "I am Captain James T. Kirk, Commander of the Starship Enterprise. We are members of Starfleet, and the United Federation of Planets. The Federation is made up of three hundred and sixty seven planets, worlds who have joined together in peace, to better the lives of their inhabitants.

"We travel through the galaxies. Non-interference with other life forms is a strict policy. We would not interrupt your life cycle now; but that your people have made contact with us. We have been able to help them establish satellites for wider use of communications in space.

"Vulcans were your forefathers, your people. Vulcans understand the completion that comes when two men join together in their search for knowledge. I return the pledge Spock gave me with great honour.

"It was the sameness of goals that brought Commander Spock after me, when I attempted to reach your desert city five days ago. I flew north, toward your mountains, at a high elevation before I realised I could not manoeuvre the controls. My shuttle crashed, throwing me clear. I suspect there are other people hidden in other secluded valleys, because of the vigilance and protection offered by the dog. Wolf found me unconscious, standing guard until I came to, leading me into the safety of your valley.

"Your valleys are untouched by contamination, as beautiful as they have always been. They are much like home to us, and we wanted only to explore them. We witnessed two men chasing a young boy, who was frightened and exhausted to the point of collapse, having just enough time to carry him to safety. There was not enough time to rescue the two men, who vanished into a nearby valley. We regret the loss of their lives.

"As in the case of our own young, our response was concern. This youth has appealed to us for guidance and direction. The boy's need is sincere, made in honesty and the innocence of youth. We have stopped to listen and consider. Because we are the future, one that you must decide on, the boy is a bridge between us. He will have the knowledge to lead his people - you - into space. You must decide if this is what you want.

"Gentlemen, we offer ourselves and our starship as the immediate connection between yourselves and the desert cities. I propose a meeting with the leaders of each valley aboard the Enterprise, within eighteen of your planetary hours."

There was a brief discussion, then - "Captain S'Kirk, we stand ready."

\\Spock?

\\These are the leaders, and there is an anxious excitement among them, most unwulcan.

"Very well, chose six representatives from each valley. I extend a personal invitation to Lu'tk and S'kal, from the city of Ur. To the city of Riate, an invitation to Ch'ei K'ph'm, Sh'mi and Tal'merk. A relative or spokesman for Svon must be included." Kirk flipped open his communicator, stepping back into the circle. Wolf went to him.

"Gentlemen, I will welcome you aboard. Energise."

* * * * *

"Scotty, we've got guests." He signalled the bridge. "Uhura, find Janice Rand if she's aboard. Dinner arrangements; seventeen Vulcans, nine humans, banquet room 3, in three point six hours. Representatives from Science, Engineering, Navigation, Medical and Botany Departments., and you're invited. Dress uniforms required. They'll need cabins, and instruction on equipment they need to use; for example, our version of a shower.

"Mr. Chekov, assemble two security guards as escorts for ship's

tour. Place guards at strategic points, to aid, direct, answer questions and keep track of the visitors. On the double, everyone."

\\Oh great galaxies, I'm tired.

* * * * *

The Captain was tired, but he still played the host. His crew had responded, representing their stations, both on the tour and at dinner. Conversations were quick and intelligent. The Adronians were as curious as Vulcans could be, with the new ways being accepted surprisingly readily. Curiosity about the Humans surfaced more as the evening slipped away. Pictures of Earth and various planets which were called home by those aboard were recalled on the computer. It was an interesting evening.

Only once had Kirk wondered, as he noticed S'kal's eyes shade to a familiar darker sparkle. *That's Spock's eyes with his version of humour.* Quickly he'd looked at Uhura, who had been discussing high frequency and communication with him. Her face was beautiful as it glowed with pleasure... although she didn't smile.

The planet beneath them was in darkness, as they were escorted to their cabins. Arrangements had been made for breakfast together and meeting with their advanced desert cousins the following day. Discovering that Humans were not telepathic had been disappointing to them, but did not change their fascination with Humanity.

Prime Minister R'yce had been contacted early in the evening. Members of his staff and the Vulcan council would assemble to meet them the following morning. They too were excited, thought Kirk.

Kirk sighed. Ch'ei K'ph'm had been a woman, even - for a Vulcan type doctor - a lovely woman. He was enjoying talking to her, flirting a little, when he heard the hum of McCoy's medical equipment behind him. *Here it comes.* Without a single hitch in the moderate diplomatic voice, and without turning, he had introduced him to Dr. Ch'ei K'ph'm. McCoy's ice blue eyes had just as quickly checked the reading and his Captain with a *later for you* promise, and became quite enthusiastic about his new role.

\\Your luck has come through again, Captain.

Kirk sighed, with a shake of his head. *\\He's just waiting till later, Spock.*

\\Yes. Jim, you must understand, that you had to go through the valleys with me. You were right all along, we were in their experimental grounds. These people had been waiting for planetary change for thousands of years. You had to find them.

*\\We had to find them, don't separate us. I sensed you knew they were there. My friend, it's been the best five days of my life... well, since... *

Dark eyes just got darker, and seemed to sparkle, in all Spock's Vulcan austerity - *\\Since the time we explored the outer perimeter of the galaxy's edge, or three months ago on - *

\\Hush - I'm trying to thank you. Adronis will be a Vulcan outpost, very well protected, with the great leadership that you'll develop in Svon. I envy the future he'll create, for he will have your values, and characteristics, and his people will know of them.

You are Spock, but still, you are their Surak, the difference for them. Kirk sighed, "Soon will have a companion that he loves at his side. I shall miss Wolf."

"There will be days of discussions now. We will not be needed as we have been. We never explored either of the cities and there must be many forms of living establishments through the many valleys. We could start where I crashed - "

"Captain Kirk, we'll see you in sick bay now," warned McCoy.

"Ah - Bones, Doctor Ch'ei K'ph'm." He acknowledged them.

"Yes." The Doctor smiled, daring him to make a false move. "The Adronian people are most curious about new life forms - you will make a perfect example of an injured humanoid for the next few days, and you won't need to take time to change your uniform, you can take it all off in sick bay."

"Help."

As Spock raised an eyebrow, the Doctor asked, "Do I need to examine you too, Spock?"

"I'll bring the chess board when I visit you, Jim."

POST SCRIPT

"Bones? What kept you on Adronis for all that time?"

"Well, Jim, I don't know. I went through their medical facilities, and was going to beam back, but these beautiful women - and all they wanted was my time."

* * * * *

And some weeks later they were back in space, mapping; in the routine of the days, chess became a nightly occurrence. The Captain had used his Human inventiveness and manipulated a winning game with Spock. They had long released the mind touch, but seemed to be aware of each other's presence without it. They sat in the quiet, talking of daily happenings. It was then that Spock admitted a possible misunderstanding, that was not especially meant to be.

"Jim, you understood that I only warned the Adronians that they were not to touch your mind?"

"Yes, Spock, I understood."

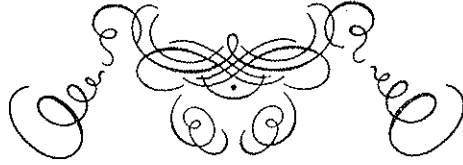
"You responded to the statement by accepting and returning the pledge."

"Yes, it seemed the most logical way of supporting you. Our goals are not so different, Spock. Yet I did take advantage of you, and will withdraw my statement, if this is improper, or an embarrassment to you." Besides, I knew you would not make the offer again.

"It is permissible, Jim."

"It seemed to be the best that I could do. Will you accept me as your partner?"

"Yes, T'hy'la." Will he ever realize? I, too, gambled on the Captain.



BEAUTY IS IN THE SOUL

She has her place upon the bridge
She decorates the Enterprise
Uhura of the lovely legs
The enormous eyes

She has been loved but values more
Group loyalty and friendship's ties
Uhura of the heart-shaped face
The oval eyes

Communication is her life
She gives the best that in her lies
Uhura of the shapely form
The liquid eyes

She captures urgent messages
From distant light-linked Galaxies
Uhura of the dancing hands
The earnest eyes

She works absorbed - her mobile face
Often expresses mute surprise
Uhura of the quick-raised head
The questioning eyes

But instant sympathy of heart
Is what her friends most greatly prize
Uhura of the listening mind
The speaking eyes

Pac Deacon